

People share their stories of mental health recovery in work and life

# panorama

Monthly Issue July 2023 #90A

A Cure for Isolation?

From Chronic Pain  
to a Colourful Life

Dreams Come True:  
The Launch of Jae  
Magsipoc's EP



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### About us

Flourish Australia is committed to walking beside people with a lived experience of mental health issues as they progress along their recovery journeys. We passionately believe in mental health recovery, and are committed to providing the best possible support and encouragement to people so they can achieve their recovery goals. We offer this help across all 70+ of our services in New South Wales, Southern Queensland, Australian Capital Territory and Victoria.

### Contact Flourish Australia!

1300 779 270 or  
flourishaustralia.org.au

Chair: Prof Elizabeth More AM  
Chief Executive Officer: Mark Orr AM  
Chief Development Officer: Peter Neilson

### About Panorama

Founded in 1996 in one of Flourish Australia's predecessor organisations (PRA), Panorama has grown to become a lifestyle magazine dedicated to informing and encouraging the recovery journey of readers. Panorama is written, designed and produced almost entirely by people with a lived experience of mental health issues.

### The faces behind Panorama...



Warren Heggarty



Grant Everett

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### Disclaimer

Panorama's content is not intended as a substitute for the advice of any specialised or qualified professional. The views expressed herein are those of the authors, not necessarily of Flourish Australia, or any associated enterprises, their staff, management, employees, or service recipients

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### Contributors include...

**Stephen Dodd** accesses services at Flourish Australia's Newcastle service, and has found relief from pain through artistic expression

**Jae Magsipoc** is a musician who accesses services at Flourish Australia's Wollongong location, and he's just launched his EP!

**Kristen Olson** is a Team Coordinator Peer Specialist at Flourish Australia's Newcastle Centre

### Contributions are welcome!

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You don't need to be a writer to share your story with Panorama's readers: we can help you to write your story. We especially like recovery stories from people with a lived experience of mental health issues.

Email us at: [panorama@flourishaustralia.org.au](mailto:panorama@flourishaustralia.org.au)



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

*Flourish Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land, sea and waterways upon which we live and work.*

*We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and recognise their strong and continuing connection to land, culture and spirit.*

*Panorama magazine would like to acknowledge all people who live with a mental health issue, as well as those who encourage and support loved ones. Our universal right to lead full and inclusive lives is the driving force behind why Panorama exists. We also acknowledge the strength it can take to share our stories. The impact of reading about people's journeys cannot be overstated. Sharing our experiences has the potential to change lives and we hope by reading true recovery stories, it gives hope, optimism and support to our readers, especially those on their mental health recovery journey.*



## FAMILY & CARERS

At Flourish Australia, we understand the important role many families and carers play in supporting someone with a lived experience of a mental health issue to stay well and part of their local community.

When someone comes to us and asks for support we discuss with them the involvement of their family and other important people in their lives, and what supports they provide. If we are able to obtain that information we will record it so our staff know who is important to the person and their recovery. We will also make contact with you to check what supports you may need to undertake your important role and discuss your involvement and communication preferences.

### Other Organisations

Sometimes families and carers want more information and other contacts. There are a range of organisations that provide specialist supports and information for carers. A list with contact details can be found on our website at: [www.flourishaustralia.org.au/family-and-carers](http://www.flourishaustralia.org.au/family-and-carers)

*Mental Health Carers NSW Ph: 1300 554 660*

*Arafmi Queensland Ph: (07) 3254 1881*

*Private Mental Health Consumer Carer Network Ph: 1300 620 042*

*Mental Health Carers Australia Ph: 1300 554 660*

*Kids Helpline Ph: 1800 551 800*

*COPMI – Children of Parents with Mental Illness: [www.copmi.net.au](http://www.copmi.net.au)*



## A Dream Comes True:

# JAE MAGSIPOC'S EP LAUNCH at New Outlook

By Grant J Everett

**Jae Magsipoc writes and sings songs about love, world peace and deep connections between souls, and music has always played a major role in his recovery and wellness. Jae officially launched his four-song EP, *There's A Place We Can See*, at Flourish Australia's New Outlook service at Wollongong.**

### The Big Night

Paul Pereira, Mental Health Worker, was the MC for the night. Paul is usually the first person you see when you walk into New Outlook, and he always has time to say "hi" to every visitor. Although Jae had some anxiety, Paul was fantastic in supporting and encouraging him.

"I was so happy with the turnout at the launch," Jae said. "In addition to my friends and staff from New Outlook, there were representatives from local businesses, including Subway, Rebel Sport, and a barista from a nearby café I go to. Some of the people I go to Church with were there on the night to support me, too. The whole ground floor of the building was just full of people!"

A number of Jae's long-time friends and past and present staff members from New Outlook took to the stage to share their pride in what Jae has accomplished. Jae has known some of them for over a decade,

and they all had such encouraging and beautiful things to say about his friendship, his music, and his journey.

Before putting on his EP for everyone's enjoyment, Jae got up to perform one of his songs, *Lovers And Poets*, live. It was received with rapturous applause.

### Who You Know

"I first connected with my producer, Jonathan Fernandez, after he liked one of the songs I'd posted online," Jae said. "He was kind enough to let me record four of my songs in his studio. He did the violin, drums, piano and the rest of the backing on the studio version of my song *Lovers And Poets*, but I wrote all of it myself."

When Jae's EP played on launch night, you could tell it was professionally recorded and mixed, as every song was crystal clear. In addition to *Lovers And Poets*, the EP included *Wanderers*, *Your Eyes Fire*, and the eponymous *There's A Place We Can See*.

The Friday following the launch, Jae went back to Jonathan's studio to record his newest song, *If The Stars Don't Help You*. He was very pleased with the results, and we look forward to hearing it on his next EP!

"Jonathan is a great producer, and he's become a good friend."

### Big Plans

"My friend Sam has been helping me to burn and pack copies of my EP with a cover and everything. I sell each CD for \$10, and they've been moving quickly! I've had to get more and more printed to meet the demand, so I hope that continues."

"At the moment, I'm exploring options about how to promote my EP and get it out there, but I'm also writing new material for my next release. My long-term goal is to actually move to New York City and try to make it there. It will happen one day!"

### New Outlook

"I've gotten a lot out of coming to Flourish Australia's New Outlook over the years. I've made a lot of friends, and I take part in a lot of the activities. The staff and the people who visit New Outlook with me have always encouraged me with my music, and I've been jamming with the member band every Monday for years now."

"New Outlook is my second home. I love Flourish Australia!"

### Performances

In addition to his time in the recording studio, Jae has extensive experience with playing live.

"I performed live at Mental Health Day in MacCabe Park in Wollongong, and at the Viva La Gong Festival. I also used to busk in Wollongong, Thirroul, and The City."

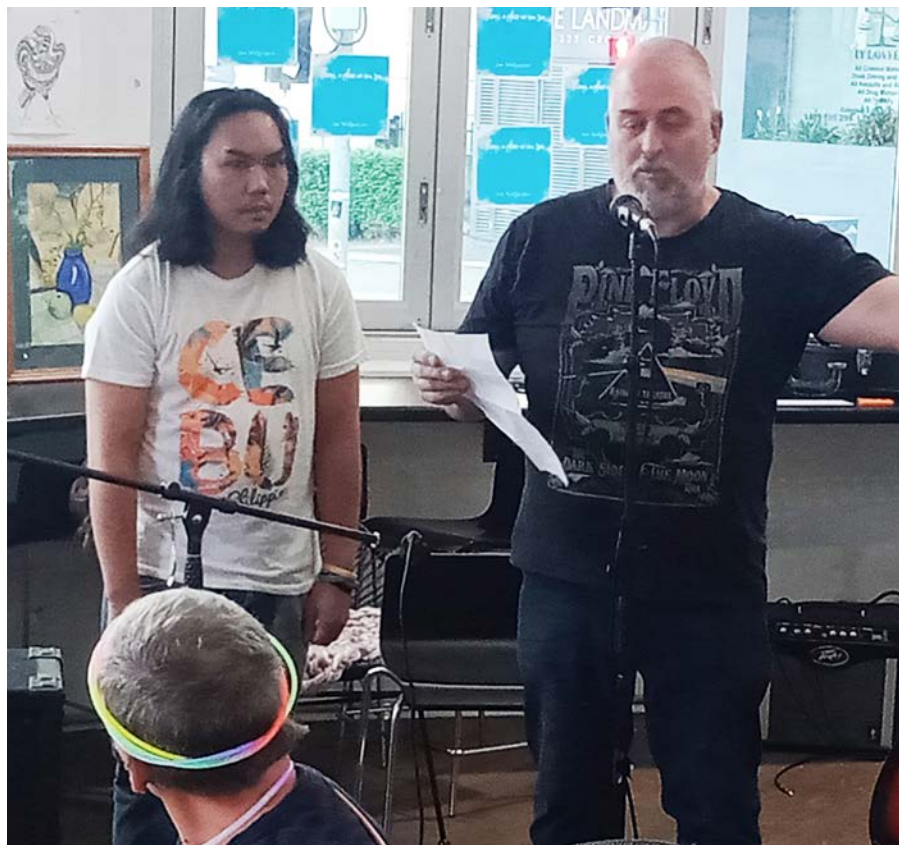
### Want to Know More?

Jae's album is available on Spotify, Triple J and the Apple Music Store. Simply Google "Jae Magsipoc" on the respective website and it'll pop right up. You can also listen to Jae's original performances on YouTube, SoundCloud, and TikTok.

Jae has been profiled on Triple J Unearthed, where they shared how he's gone from strength to strength by overcoming adversity, and how his mission in life is to help the world.

Jae's recovery story, "Jamming Towards Big Dreams," can be found in the December 2021 Monthly issue of Panorama on the Flourish Australia website under News > Panorama

**OPPOSITE: Jae, performing *Lovers And Poets*, live! RIGHT, TOP: There was an amazing turnout on the night. RIGHT, BELOW: Paul Pereira, Mental Health Worker, was the MC on the night. PHOTOS BY GRANT J EVERETT**



Paul and the entire New Outlook team came together to decorate the centre with balloons, album cover posters and coasters for Jae's big night. This event could not of happened without Paul or the New Outlook team, so many thanks to you all!

**Flourish Australia New Outlook**  
3 Station Street, Wollongong NSW 2500  
1300 779 270  
Weekdays 8AM to 4PM



# That Special Smile

Because it's all about THEM

**Aristotle said that humans are social beings. Well, that is easier said than done for many of us who experience intense anxiety in social situations like meeting new people, dealing with workmates, making speeches or going to parties. The fear that we will be harshly judged, criticised, laughed at or even humiliated can lead us to avoid the very things that Aristotle says make us human.**

If you feel uneasy dealing with other people, it may help you to know what Dale Carnegie dubbed the 'big secret.' Carnegie wrote 'How to Win Friends and Influence People' in 1936 based upon the experience of courses he ran at night school for adults. Paraphrasing John Dewey, he wrote that 'the deepest urge in human nature is "the desire to be important."' (Carnegie, 1936; 1981, p. 47)

There are other ways of putting this. Freud called it the desire to be 'great' and nowadays we use terms like feeling special, seen,

recognised, acknowledged etc. Carnegie says this is a fundamental human need. So his basic rule is, when dealing with other people, say and do things in a way that does not deflate their innate need to be important!

## Focus on the other one

Carnegie tells us to focus always on the other person, NOT on ourselves. He tells us to smile, to make eye contact and to remember their names -among other things, but these are fundamental.

Now Carnegie was writing before World War II. Surely times have changed? Well, yes and no. A more recent book by Leil Lowndes says that Carnegie was right that a smile is the best way to open the door to a stranger... only do it a little more slowly and thoughtfully so that you do not come across as glib- like a politician! (Lowndes, 1999; 2014, pp. 5-8)

'Look at the other person's face for a second. Pause. Soak in their persona. Then let a big, warm, responsive smile flood over your face and overflow into your eyes.' The pause, says Lowndes, will signal to them that the smile is genuine and just for them! (p. 8)

## Eye contact

Eye contact is another key to the door of social interaction. Like the smile, the type of eye contact is important. Taking the lead from Carnegie, however, your own mental attitude towards the other person will make your smile and your eye contact come out OK. Your best bet is to take as much of an interest in the other person as you can. Fixed stares and grins won't work- because they tend to show you are preoccupied with your own thoughts (or anxiety). Remember too that some cultures have different rules about eye contact, so if someone is not reciprocating, give them the benefit of the doubt.

Learning the other person's name is hard when it is a sudden meeting but you can take advantage of this and ask 'what was your name again?' That question does not demonstrate you are forgetful- it demonstrates you are interested! Don't forget to tell them your name too!

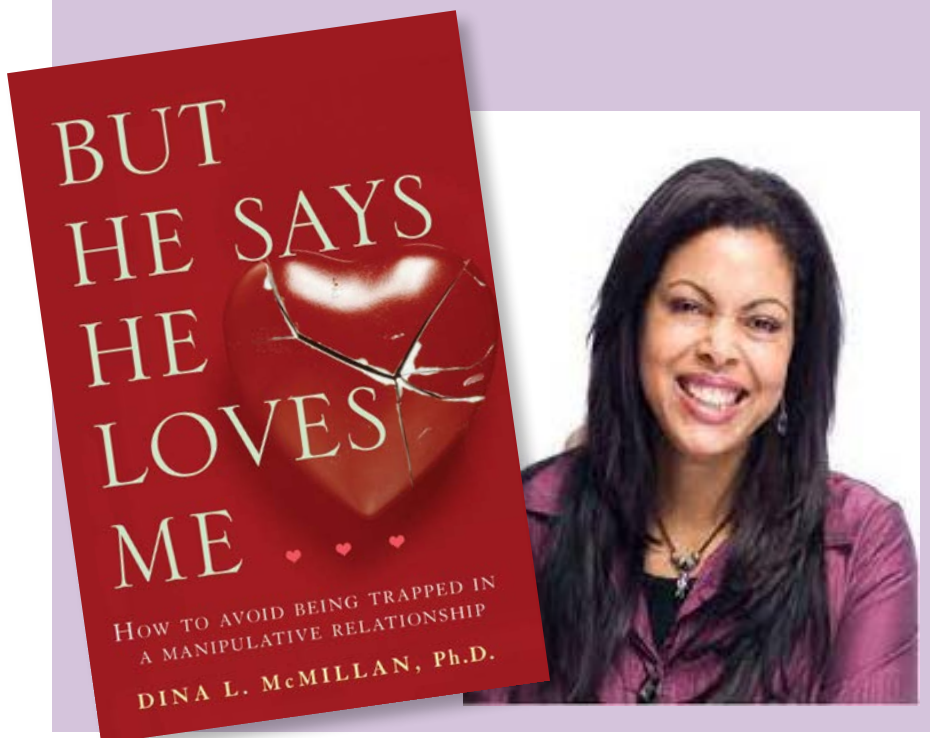
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# BOOK REVIEW

## MANIPULATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Review by Warren Heggarty



**"But He Says He Loves Me: How to avoid being trapped in a manipulative relationship", by Dina L. McMillan, published by Allen and Unwin (2007)**

Have you noticed that there are some people who seem to find themselves in one abusive relationship after another? Have you also noticed there are some people who just seem to have a knack of zeroing in on such vulnerable people and abusing them?

In a problematic sense, narcissistic abusers and their victims are 'made for each other.' The abuser is ATTRACTED to vulnerable people. Whereas people who tend to be self-sacrificing and put other people's interests before their own seem to be ATTRACTED to abusers. Even if they are aware that the other person has faults, they actually believe they can 'fix' them.

McMillan says, 'As a social psychologist specialising in interpersonal relationships, I am constantly amazed and appalled by the behaviour of abusive men toward their partners. I am also dismayed, disgusted and angered. What I am "amazed" by is the incredible consistency of these men in finding the most effective ways to manipulate the women who love them. Whether these men live in the outback of Australia or downtown New York, they do the same things -practically word for word and act for act. A colleague of mine commented 'It's like they all read the same handbook!'(p.7)

This book provides information that attempts to break the cycle of abuser and abused by enabling women to become empowered through knowledge of what their abusers are really doing. The unusual thing about it is its two-in-one design.

The right hand side of each spread is indeed 'But he says he loves me' which describes the plight of a victim in a manipulative relationship.

The left hand side of each spread is another book entitled 'The abuser's handbook' which tells the same story from the point of view of the manipulator.

In the early stages of the relationship with an abuser, you will be 'love bombed.' The same happens with gangs and cults. Once you are in, it is very difficult for you to escape without doing a lot of, shall we say 'growing.' And that means developing 'boundaries.'

Abusers do not respect anybody's personal boundaries (unless it suits them for a time). Their victims often do not even HAVE boundaries.

Some of the advice given may seem fairly obvious and basic, but the problem is, a manipulator will use this as cover. The advice is, perhaps necessarily, deficit based rather than strengths based.

For example, early on in a relationship, you need to pay attention to how he speaks about women and take note at how he responds to other attractive women. Be careful of a man who gives you orders or criticises you. See if he comes easily to anger. Listen to see whether he tends to blame others.

Perhaps it would have been better to give more detail on how a REAL man would conduct himself in these situations. A gentleman, so I am told, will always be respectful of women, will not ogle other ladies if he is dating, is able to control his temper, would not DARE criticise you or give you orders, and he always takes responsibility for himself.

NOTE: In the context of harmful relationships, please note that it's not only men who can be the abusive or manipulative party.

**ABOVE LEFT: Available from most bookshops.**

**ABOVE RIGHT: Dina L. McMillan**



## FROM CHRONIC PAIN

## TO A COLOURFUL LIFE

By Stephen Dodd (as told to Kristen Olson)

**When Stephen started attending the Flourish Australia day-to-day living centre in Newcastle in 2016, he was living with a combination of chronic physical pain and mental health distress. Stephen had never considered himself an artist, but once he found the joy in expressing his creativity, everything in his life changed for the better.**

### Breaking

Two knee replacements and several other serious surgical operations had left Stephen with severe nerve damage and relentless pain. Stephen actually woke up during three of his procedures and could hear everything happening in the operating room, but was unable to move or respond.

After the nerve damage left him with a "frozen foot," Stephen found himself relying on dangerously high doses of pain medication to get by.

"I wanted to cut my foot off due to the pain. It was so severe that it was all that I could think of."

Living with this unbearable hardship contributed to many of Stephen's difficult childhood memories resurfacing. He found it difficult to

accept that he could not change these experiences, and was also desperately searching for a way to reduce his reliance on harmful levels of medication.

"I came to the point where I realised I had to find a different way to cope, otherwise the amount of painkillers I was taking would kill me."

### Finding Hope

Stephen found himself submerged in darkness for years, but he began to see a glimmer of hope as he started sitting in on the art group at the centre. It wasn't until early 2022 that Stephen tried expressing himself through art, and he experimented with different mediums, textures, and canvases. However, Stephen gravitated toward vivid colours and sparkly glitter.

"The colour and glitter are what work for me; bright colours give me a reason to feel better. Using a variety of colours has been one of the best ways for me to express how I feel. It's how I want my life to look."

As Stephen found his creative groove, he discovered that while he was making his pieces he was able to tap into a creative headspace, rather than a destructive one. It became a way of reclaiming his story, of viewing his life through colour and light instead of darkness. Best of all, while he creates, Stephen reports that he is not in pain. Instead of focusing on the hurt, he is able to tap into the joy he gets from sharing through his vibrant creations. As a result, Stephen's need to take high doses of pain medication has lessened.



"I have gone from taking 26 tablets a day to 5."

Although Stephen reports that he is still finding it difficult to accept parts of himself and his past, he discovered that his relationship with trauma changes when he is being creative.

"I have a purpose: transforming my pain into something beautiful."

**100% Out Of Stock!**

In October 2022, Flourish Australia in Newcastle hosted an Art Exhibition for Mental Health Month where Stephen exhibited a whole room filled with his artworks. He ended up selling every single piece!

"But I don't do it for the money. I do it because I enjoy it, and it manages my pain."

Stephen is continuing to create more art with great discipline each week. At this rate, he will fill an entire gallery!

**More Than Just Coping**

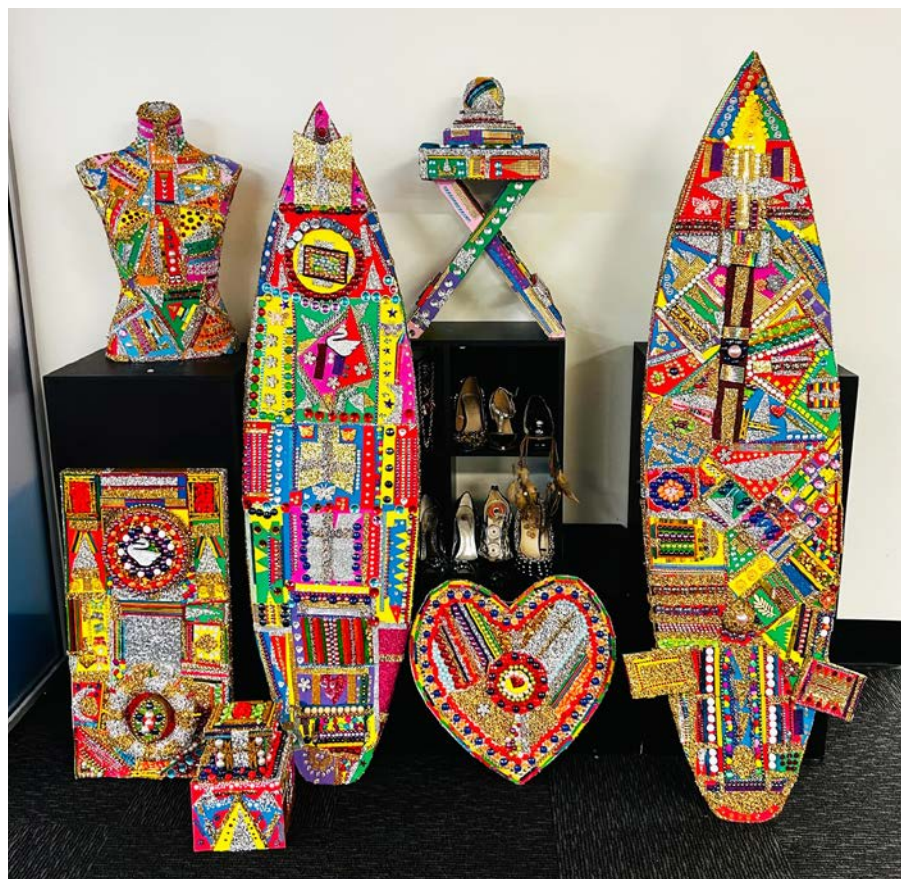
"I want my story to help others. I can't fix my past or change what happened, but I am working with what I have now, and I know that the colours I use to brighten other people's day has helped me to accept my own journey."

"Everyone who makes art does it for their own reasons, but for me? Art keeps me alive. In addition to managing my pain, making art gives me meaning and understanding about my life in a way that pain medication doesn't. I also enjoy exchanging ideas with other artists, and sometimes they'll bring in new materials for everyone to use."

"Everyone who attends the centre is different, and they each do what works for them and their recovery. Some people come here to read, to make art, whatever, it doesn't matter. Here, you are not only accepted for who you are, but celebrated."

"I also receive excellent support from all the Flourish Australia staff. It's a great team they have here!"

**ABOVE: Stephen Dodd, creating. OPPOSITE: Some of Stephen's hand-painted pieces. There's a good chance they've already been sold! PHOTO BY KRISTEN OLSON**



**Flourish Australia Newcastle**  
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 Open 9am to 5pm Weekdays

*“Would you like fries with that?”*



# Knowing How to Deal With The Hard Sell

By Grant J Everett

**Hard sell is an aggressive technique used to pressure you into buying a product on the spot. These tactics often result in negative feelings towards the salesperson, drastically lowering the chances of repeat business as bad word-of-mouth causes brand damage.**

But you may find some salespeople will still do it, so we all have to be careful.

Clever advertising, flashy presentation and sincere promises can make any product sound essential, but this goes beyond a vacuum cleaner salesperson sticking their foot in a slamming door; we can also experience hard sell from bosses, workmates, neighbours, friends, and even our family. Sometimes, you may not even know you're being given the hard sell, as salespeople will pretend to be your friend, to behave as if they are the ones helping you!

## Watch out for literal tricks of the trade

We may like to think we're immune to hard-sell, but we all have the potential to accept bad deals. The best way to protect yourself is to learn how to ask questions, and how to say "NO" if it is not right for you. This may sound as simple as breathing, but many find it difficult to say this shortest of words.

We're raised to be polite, and a flat rejection can feel rude. Hard sell practitioners are aware of this, and will use your good manners to their advantage.

If you want to be more resistant to hard sell, consider learning some of the skills salespeople use. Author Robert Cialdini is an expert on selling, and his book "Pre-Suasion" he explains that in addition to being a well-spoken charmer with a bulletproof pitch, the best salespeople prepare extensively to convince you of the importance and desirability of a product before sharing any actual facts.

Cialdini warns that when confronted with a persuasive sales pitch, we must spend as much time focusing on the negatives as we do listening to the positives. He acknowledges persuasion is more of an art than a science, but no matter what, always be sure you have all the facts before signing on the dotted line.

## Red flags

High pressure sales tactics play on negative emotions like fear, greed, vanity, guilt, ambition, frustration, anxiety and loneliness. Gratifying these emotions can be a strong motivator, so flattering you and playing on your fear of missing out will help the salesperson convince you that buying their product is a smart decision. They might focus on the product's limited availability, how

many people are waiting to purchase it, or warn that the price might drastically increase if you walk away.

Another common tactic on selling large items is to provide gifts, as we are conditioned to reciprocate. Timeshare companies are infamous for providing free weekends away if you attend their seminars...where they'll spend hours pressuring you into making major purchases.

Remember that if you accept a "free" gift, you are under no obligation to make a purchase. Otherwise it's not really free, is it?

## The opposite to hard-sell?

When shopping for major items, there's a lot you can do to protect yourself. Firstly, work out a budget, and avoid impulse purchases by giving yourself a "cooling off period" to measure the pros and cons.

Every salesperson will tell you their deal is fantastic, and may show you data to back it up, and it may well be a fantastic deal. However, NEVER fully trust the word of a hard-sell salesperson! As they say, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is, so do your research, return with questions that YOU want answered, and make sure they're answered clearly.

If you're feeling under pressure to make a decision, step back and ask yourself the vital questions: Can I afford this? Does it meet my needs? Could I get a better price by negotiating? What happens if I don't purchase this right now?

Caution is particularly important when applying for finance, as contracts can contain restrictive terms, unfavourable interest rates, and major exit fees. Of course, not everyone is trying to give you the hard sell, and some opportunities could turn out to be very, very rewarding indeed, so the important thing is to ask all the questions you need to ask to ensure you're getting the best deal for YOU.

## Sources:

"Resisting the Hard Sell," by Kevin Evers, associate editor at Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2016/10/resisting-the-hard-sell>

"How To Avoid Hard Sell Sales Tactics," by Mike Cormack

<https://elementfinance.com.au/avoid-hard-sell-sales-tactics/>



haven't been able to resist the temptation to stop and sift through our collection. We haven't been able to keep the box full for long! Despite restocking the Library full to the brim each Friday, we often find our stash has been drained come Monday morning. We are pleased that there has been so much community interest, and even more excited that community members have left items like their own Zines, or colourful stickers.

Our hope for The Zine Project is to watch it grow through the community, as well as the organisation. We are inviting other Flourish Australia locations to participate in the movement, and Nina is offering to teach other services how to create these crowd-pleasing booklets. We'd ultimately like to exchange Zines via email so that people across the organisation can print out other worksites' masterpieces to add to their own collections. How cool would it be to put Zines from all around Australia in our little Steel Street Box?

"The Zine Project is a celebration and acknowledgement of Newcastle's creative and social communities, and aims to be a platform to share and show work with the wider community," said Nina. "It invites collaboration, experimentation and playfulness, promotes community spirit and inclusiveness, and seeks to give a creative voice to people from all walks of life."

**ABOVE: The Centre's Zine Library Box on Steel Street. It never stays stocked for long! PHOTO BY KRISTEN OLSON**

# THE ZINE PROJECT

**August 6-12** By Kristen Olson

**Nina, a Mental Health Worker at Flourish Australia's Newcastle service - and an absolute creative powerhouse - has been leading the way with a brilliant art venture: The Zine Project.**

Flourish Australia team members, Lisa, Kristina and Nina have combined forces within their artgroups to incorporate Zine creations into the mix! Looking for ways to promote access to creativity, connecting with the community, and providing opportunities for people who access services to try new things, The Zine Project does all of those things.

Nina has spent the first months of 2022 focusing on Zine-making in her structured groups to fill the "Zine Library Box" that she installed on Flourish Australia's back gate on Steel Street (after receiving approval from City Council).

A "Zine" is a miniature magazine-style booklet full of expressive text and imagery. These self-published works are made from a single piece of folded paper, making them cost effective and simple to create, yet they hold the potential to share content about any and every topic you could dream of. People who attend art groups at the centre have filled their Zines with subject matter varying from haikus and collections of silly-sounding German words to mental health information. Nina even has a Zine about how to make a Zine!

Since installing the Zine Library Box on the busy side street, pedestrians

## Flourish Australia Newcastle

627 Hunter Street  
Newcastle NSW 2300  
(02) 9393 9700  
Open 9am to 5pm  
Weekdays

ABOVE: Gin the cat reminds us: 'We have a lot of needs!' PHOTO BY HAYLEY BALLIS

# Lend a Paw...

By Warren Heggarty

## OR EVEN A HAND! IT'S GOOD FOR YOU!

**Lending a hand to others is good for us because it contradicts that old false message that goes round and round in our heads sometimes: 'No one cares! Well, then, I care and that proves the message wrong. Volunteering is one way you can put this into action.**

"Volunteering produces positive, life-affirming emotions," according to psychologist Dr Tim Sharp, from the Happiness Institute. "Research consistently shows that genuinely happy people don't just feel good, they also do good, and doing good contributes to feeling good..."

Unselfish behaviour is NATURAL. 'It's a throwback to prehistoric times when cooperative behaviour meant better survival odds. Even today, by connecting to, and assisting others, 'we not only feel we belong, but we also feel safer,'" says Sharp. (Osfield, 2022)

Animals are family too, of course, and helping our furry friends is just as therapeutic! Hayley Ballis, who

accesses Flourish Australia's Penrith Service has been volunteering regularly for three hours a week at the Blacktown Animal Rehoming Centre.

'I do very much like animals' Hayley admits, Her role at Blacktown is basically to 'socialise' between 12 and 20 cats to prepare them for adoption. 'There are dogs, cats and even a few rabbits' she says 'Some are surrendered by owners who can't look after them, some are strays and some are picked up by the local council. Most of the volunteers are involved with looking after the dogs but I am more of a cat person!

What are the benefits for Hayley in volunteering her time?

'I wanted to help and do what is best for the animals. In doing so it forms a sort of routine for myself, by coming on a certain day every week for three hours.'

From a recovery perspective, developing a sense of routine is extremely important to many people living with mental health issues.

'I am also gaining experience with animals and their behaviours and knowledge of different types of cats.'

Hayley's own cat is Gin (pictured) who she acquired in 2022. 'It wasn't easy at first. It took a few weeks to get used to the idea. He's such a lovely cat! I had to realise that I've got another "person" to worry about from now on. You have to change their litter, their food bowls, wash and clean and groom them... they have a lot of needs! In the long run I feel less lonely and I have developed more of a sense of responsibility.'

Volunteering is for everybody,' says Hayley. 'Not only for developing routines, but to get to know new people, enhance your life experience and also: it looks good on a resume!

*Thanks to Sarah Mitchell for her assistance with this story.*

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# EMPLOYMENT EXCUSES

## *Are they holding you back?*

By Warren Heggarty

**Career coach and author Marty Nemko boasts having had 5,300 clients over the years. (Nemko, 2018) He says there is a 'Grand Canyon of difference between my successful and unsuccessful clients.' The biggest negative differentiator, the thing that holds people back the most is what we shall call 'making excuses.'**

Nemko uses the term 'lazy' as he is referring to the general population. In fact he states 'I'm not talking here about people with severe mental or physical illness.' So we thought we should adapt his line of thinking to that exact audience!

We know that when mental health issues and the effects of medication come into play, the term 'lazy' can be outright unfair. Some of us who have complex mental health issues have been told by psychiatrists that we'd never be able to work!

The important thing is not to let ourselves be limited by labels and not to make excuses that stop us achieving what we are capable of.

### Some of the EXCUSES

- I don't know what I want to do. I don't want to pick the wrong thing.
- I'm afraid of imposing
- I'm afraid of embarrassing myself.
- I'm afraid of rejection.
- I don't want to sell out.

### Retorts to the Excuses

**I don't know what I want to do. I don't want to pick the wrong thing.**

In an age where people are talking about 'the gig economy' and where some younger people especially often jump from career to career without hesitation, this is an ironic excuse. Besides, if what you want to do is support yourself, it is unlikely you will make the wrong choice. If you make a mistake, you can learn from it. Keep trying, you'll find out what you want to do.

**I'm afraid of imposing** – an excuse for not networking with people, not asking favours, not following up your contacts, not ringing or emailing an employer about a job. If you have issues with self esteem, this can be a bit of a worry. But when you look for a job you are actually going to do THEM a favour. That's why they pay you.

**I'm afraid of embarrassing myself.** Looking for a job is not embarrassing. NOT looking for a job when you are capable and ready might be grounds for embarrassment. Watch a few episodes of Fawlty Towers. That program is a master class in embarrassing oneself. You are unlikely to be as good at this as Basil Fawlty but if you are, you have a promising career ahead in comedy!

**I'm afraid of rejection.** You too!? So afraid, it seems that you are willing to reject yourself without even giving yourself a chance. Are you really afraid of others rejecting you, or of YOU realising that you could do with some improvement or practice in some areas. If the latter, you know what to do!

**I don't want to sell out.** OK, if you are a vegan, don't look for jobs in an abattoir. If you are a pacifist, don't join the army. They are unlikely to want you anyway. But hundreds of thousands of public employees experience changes of government every couple of years with no ill effect. Supporting yourself is not selling out.

**ABOVE: Give it a go! PHOTOS BY WARREN HEGGARTY**

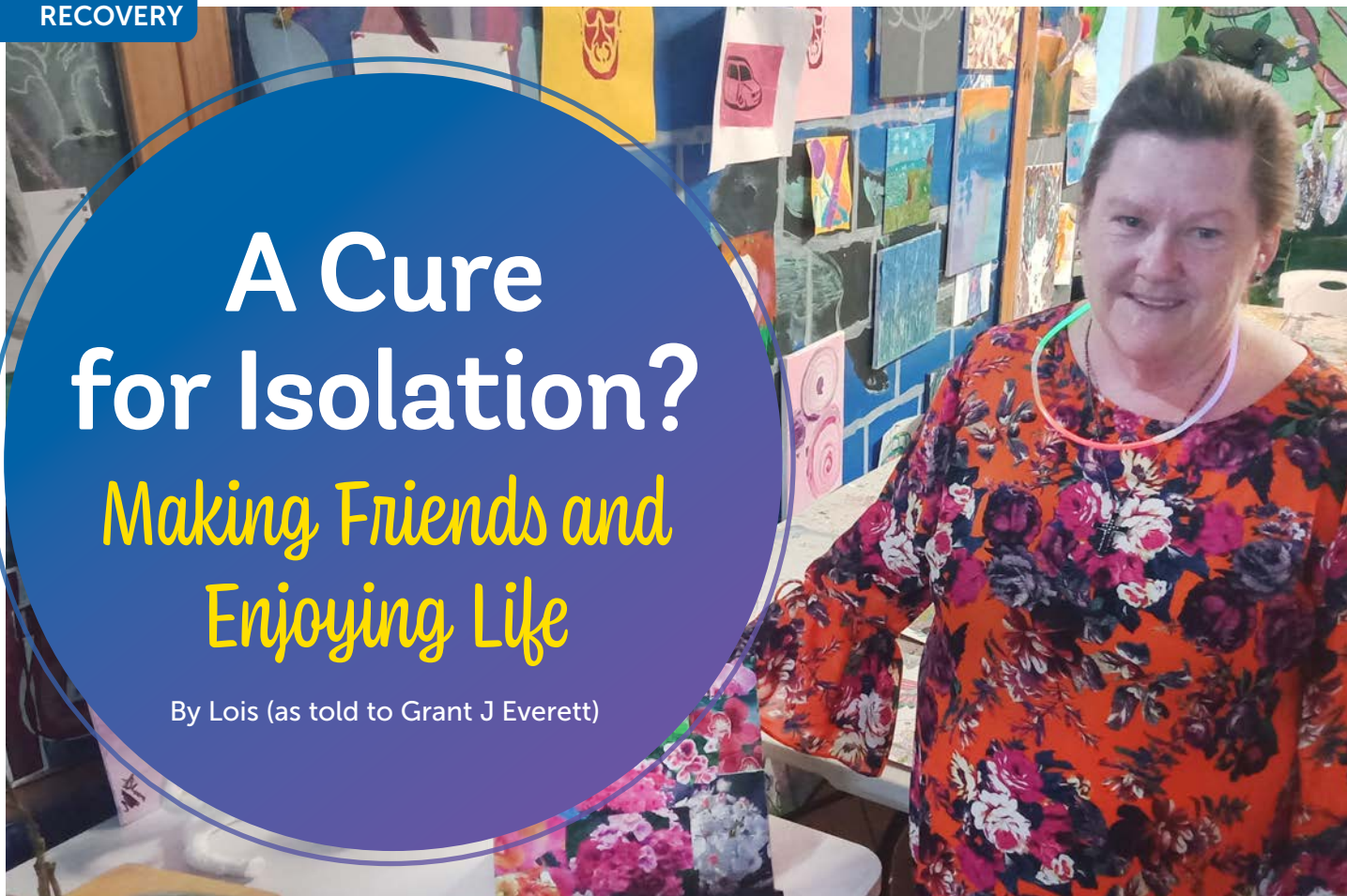
### WORKS CITED

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# A Cure for Isolation?

## Making Friends and Enjoying Life

By Lois (as told to Grant J Everett)



**I discovered the hard way that it can be very easy to become isolated. I'd fallen out of contact with my best friend after she retired, and I wasn't getting out of the house much anymore. While my husband and son live at home with me, my husband has usually got his nose in a book and my son hardly leaves his room. I started to feel very alone.**

Just before Christmas in 2022, I was on my way back from the dentist when I spotted the "New Outlook" sign out the front of Flourish Australia's day-to-day living service at Wollongong. I'd actually brought my son to check out the place a decade ago, and as I have a mental health issue of my own and I live with Parkinson's, I decided to give it a go for myself. I didn't get a referral or anything: I just walked in and had a talk with Renee, the Team Coordinator Peer Specialist. We filled out some forms, and I started attending New Outlook the very next day!

All the people here are nice and welcoming, and I've made some good friends who I catch up with regularly. I visit New Outlook three days a week, and it's been great! I love it. Lunch only costs me \$5, and they provide a beautiful two-course meal for that price. The meals are actually so generous that I don't usually feel like eating dinner that day!

My husband, Ken, has also started attending New Outlook with me. He's been enjoying it too.

### Staying Occupied

On Tuesdays I attend the Photography Group, where we all pile into the bus and head off somewhere interesting to take snaps. I actually use my phone for this purpose, and I've gotten some very nice results. Wednesday is our Art Group, and I've recently been colouring in and tie-dying shirts in bright colours. Thursdays I attend the Upcycling Group, where we take old, broken things and make them into something beautiful.

### The Right Support

My Flourish Australia support worker, Emma, is my go-to person if I ever need anything. She recently supported me to get in touch with Vision Australia so they could help me in getting a new pair of multifocal glasses. As I have to be careful with my finances, I was very happy to get a discount.

My husband receives NDIS support as he has vascular dementia, but thankfully it's still manageable at this point. He has funding for a cleaner to come to our home to tidy up for a couple of hours each week, and that's made life so much better. I did have the opportunity to get some more NDIS support of my own, but just as I was filling out the forms I decided that I didn't really need it, and that this funding would be more of a benefit to somebody else who's not doing as well as I am.

While I initially started coming to New Outlook to make some new friends, I've found many more reasons to keep on visiting. I get so much out of my time here, and it's so fulfilling. I'd recommend New Outlook to anyone!

ABOVE: Lois in the art studio at New Outlook. PHOTO BY GRANT J EVERETT

# Community Advisory Council Briefings

With Luke Wrightson, Chair

Flourish Australia's Community Advisory Council (The Council) are people accessing Flourish Australia services who have been elected by their peers to represent their local service and be their voice. The Council meet regularly to discuss issues raised by their peers, review and advise on policies and submissions, share new ideas on how to better support people, be part of interview panels and many other things! Council Members have a 2 year tenure and are then invited to be part of The Council Alumni.

**Attending:** 17 Council Members from numerous Flourish Australia locations met at the Hub at Sydney Olympic Park on the 28th and 29th of May, and were joined by members of the Senior Leadership Team including Mark Orr AM, Susan McCarthy and Fay Jackson.

## Issues raised

**Will a lack of confidence be an issue if a person accessing services wants to make a complaint?** There is an established complaints process anyone can follow, and if a person wants to self-advocate, Flourish Australia's Senior Independent Advocate can help. Other options include the Anti-Discrimination Department of NSW, Department of Fair Trading, Disability Advocates, Local Health Districts, or Local, State or Federal Members.

**A question was raised asking whether the People and Culture team let people know the results of their job interviews.** It's confirmed the P&C Team do contact unsuccessful applicants so they know what to do better

in future interviews and provide feedback when requested.

The RAS-DS is going to be a useful recovery and wellbeing app designed for the people who access services and the staff who deliver them. A video about the RAS-DS was shown to the Council, and they felt it was concise, informative and easy to understand.

A discussion was held around the different types of advocacy: individual, service, regional, organisational, and systemic. The importance of privacy and confidentiality was mentioned. Fay Jackson spoke about when it's time to "fight the good fight," and when it's time to tread more lightly and "dance the dance."

As Council Members have a two-year tenure, several Members will exit on the 26th of July, but they will undoubtedly continue to give back to their local services and communities by speaking for positive change and taking an active role in mentoring other locals. As Alumni Council Members, they may be called upon to share their experience at conferences and focus groups.

"The two days I had at Flourish Australia's Head Office was good and very informative," said Council Member Adaeze Chimbo from the Camperdown service. "I enjoyed seeing the rest of The Council in person, as well as the staff members who run Flourish Australia. I'm generally a quiet person, but I noticed my contribution was always valued and that no question or answer I had was wrong. It was a very safe environment...and the food was delicious! Thank you!



## Back On Track Health Dental Health Week 2023: August 7-13

Dental Health Week is the Australian Dental Association's (ADA) major annual oral health campaign, and the focus is the importance of taking care for our teeth and gums now so we can maintain our smiles for life.

In order to maintain good oral health for life, the campaign has four messages:

- 1) Brush your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste
- 2) Clean between your teeth daily using floss or interdental brushes
- 3) Eat a healthy, balanced diet and limit sugar intake
- 4) Visit the dentist regularly for check-ups and preventive care

By addressing these issues, we can minimize – or even prevent – tooth decay and gum disease.

Dental Health Week can be an excellent prompt to visit the dentist if it's been a while since your last appointment, and seeing a dentist is the best way to get personalized advice. If you don't have a regular dentist, you can use the Australian Dental Association's "Find A Dentist" search engine to connect up with one nearby.

For information about everything and anything to do with oral health, the [teeth.org.au](https://teeth.org.au) website is full of trustworthy and up-to-date oral health advice written by dentists from all around Australia.

# YOUR JOURNEY TO EMPLOYMENT

Every year **1 in 5** Australians will experience **some form of mental health issue.**

Flourish Australia provides mental health specialised disability employment services (DES) supporting people living with a mental health issue to access sustainable employment.

**Flourish Australia DES locations:**

Bankstown • Broken Hill • Caringbah • Cessnock • Harris Park  
Hornsby • Liverpool • Maitland • Penrith • Seven Hills

To see if you qualify for our free service, please call us for a confidential discussion or visit our website for more information.

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