

Fife Bipolar Group

www.cfbg.co.uk

Issue 37 December 09



Merry Christmas

Empowering Bipolar People in Fife

About the Fife Bipolar Group

We meet once a month in Kirkcaldy & welcome people from all over Fife. The main purpose of the group is to offer a supportive environment to those affected by bipolar and allow them to talk about and share their experiences with others. Membership is free & you do not need a referral.

We provide information & support through our group via the website, a monthly magazine & regular activities that raise awareness of living with bipolar. If you'd like to talk or just be around people experiencing what you're going through, please come along!

People with bipolar disorder

Friends Relatives Carers

Meeting

2nd Tuesday of every month
7 - 9pm

Address

Fife Bipolar Group
The Express Group Kirkcaldy
110 Rosslyn Street
KY1 3AD

Contact

fifebipolargroup@cfbg.co.uk
www.cfbg.co.uk
0753 863 9461

Disclaimer FBG cannot be held responsible for any information supplied in this magazine. Any views expressed by articles do not necessarily represent the views of FBG. The Group's decision on material to be included is final.

Christmas Cards

Bipolar Fellowship Scotland have produced a seasonal christmas card for purchase. Cards cost £3 per packet (10 cards per pack), includes postage and packing. To order cards please go to www.bipolarscotland.org.uk where you will find the christmas cards listed. All money raised from the sale of christmas cards will be used for services run by Bipolar Fellowship Scotland .

Contents

- ◆ Dr Liz Miller
4—9
- ◆ Poetry book published.
10—11
- ◆ Monthly Recipe
12
- ◆ Bipolar Scotland
Membership
14—15
- ◆ What's on in Fife
13

Committee

Chairperson Mark
Secretary Pauline
Website James
Magazine Ross
Treasurer Barbara
Support Lee
Librarian Margaret

Love, Peace,
JY

We're always looking for contributions so, please get in touch with any comments or ideas you have for the magazine.

Dr Liz Miller

What happened & how she coped...



Liz Miller was a doctor. Then she became a patient. No surprises there – people from all walks of life fall ill. But if you are a doctor it is different, and if it is a mental illness you are suffering from, it is doubly different. There is a sense that you have let the side down. When a doctor falls ill, the medical profession closes ranks and goes into collective denial.

“Doctors are brought up to think that they are different from patients. You have to believe you are not going to catch the diseases you are treating. It was part of the macho attitude in medicine – the attitude that a doctor who fell ill had breached a tradition, fallen from grace. It simply wasn’t done.”

Dr Miller's illness, manic depression (now known as bipolar disorder), struck in her late 20s and has shaped her life. But what has shaped her career was the way the medical profession responded to her illness – with incomprehension followed by rejection and denial. She responded by setting up the Doctors' Support Network for others in her position, and by writing a book – a guide to avoiding mental illness without the help of doctors, by noting your feelings and acting on them – something she says the medical profession signally failed to do for her. “If they had been nice to me, I need not have done any of this. It would have saved me all the trouble,” she says.

Liz was 28 and training in neurosurgery in Edinburgh when she had her first breakdown in the mid-1980s. She was doing research on sodium metabolism, speaking at international conferences and had a promising career ahead of her. One professor called Liz “the brightest young thing in neurosurgery” in a decade.



“That was when things went belly up. It was a combination of things – I was the only woman in neurosurgery, I had found it difficult to settle in Edinburgh, my brother was going through a divorce, all my support network was swept away. I got depressed. Looking back I probably always had a tendency to depression and had not realised it. That was just how it had always been. Then I became manic, I stopped going in to work and I got sectioned. I ended up in Edinburgh Royal Infirmary.”

It was the first of three breakdowns that led to Liz being placed in a locked ward in one hospital after another for her own safety. Her career in ruins, she struggled for a decade to get well and back into work, working as a locum GP and as an accident and emergency doctor, before the next breakdown put her back in hospital. It was a bleak time.

She ended up in the Bethlem Royal Hospital, one of the last true asylums in England, set amidst several acres of parkland in Kent. There she met for the first time other doctors with mental health problems like her own. It was a revelation. She realised that she had been colluding with the profession to deny her own illness, because that

was a way of getting back to work and carrying on. Meeting other doctors afflicted by mental illness helped put her own problems in perspective.

“If there is a stigma and prejudice against mental illness in the outside world, it is 10 times worse in the medical profession. A doctor in a mental asylum is like a policeman who gets sent to prison, or an accountant caught fiddling the figures. I had always been proud of my brain, my ability to think on my feet and to know what to do regardless of what was going on around me. But having a mental health problem goes to the core of who you are. If you break a leg, that's a problem with your leg. If you have a mental illness, that's a problem with you.” Liz was helped by what she says were the first truly empathetic psychiatrists she had come across in her perambulations around the mental health system.

“Psychiatrists tend to observe patients – they don't engage with them. I have met nice psychiatrists. One was a junior doctor called Raj Persaud – before he became well known as a writer and broadcaster. He was good at talking to patients and engaging with them. He was a good communicator and he tried to put things in context.”

Feeling, possibly for the first time, safe and accepted, she finally acknowledged that she was ill, that her medical ambitions were dust and that she might never be able to work again. “Everything I had worked for had gone up in smoke – I had blown everything. Depression seemed appropriate,” she said.

Liz's route to recovery began with the establishment of a self help group for doctors like herself. It was the mid-

whether their health is OK – and I think they are very different.

“Three friends of mine committed suicide while under GMC provisions. They were among nine doctors who took their own lives out of 214 who were under GMC provisions in 2004. If that had been an intensive care unit there would have been an investigation. I don't think that needs to happen. There has to be a better way.”

Liz's own recovery – once she had accepted what she had lost, which was the hardest part – began when she joined the Manic Depression Fellowship, now called the Bipolar Organisation. She started as a volunteer, doing one morning a week. Then with the encouragement of the chief executive, Mary Fulford, she got involved in the self-management programme – which she describes as “the single greatest advance in the management of bipolar disorder since the discovery of lithium”. The breakthrough came when she was asked to write a column for the Fellowship's magazine, *Pendulum*. “That was a lifeline. It enabled me to feel useful again. I hated medication, it always made me feel bad, and I wrote about looking for non-medical therapies. They were scientifically researched but not drug-based. At the same time I was setting up the Doctors' Support Network, talking to people, having parties and writing. I looked at my life and realised that I was doing everything I wanted to do – I just wasn't getting paid for it.”

From those beginnings she gradually rebuilt her life. She taught herself how to manage her moods, and has not taken drugs for her condition for eight years. The key was accepting that she was responsible for them, she says. She now works as a part-time occupational health

doctor and GP. She was supported by her husband, Richard, of whom she speaks with affection and gratitude for the support he showed through her illness. But eventually the couple separated and for the last three years she has been living with her new partner – a key factor, she admits, in her new-found equilibrium.



In 2008, Liz was voted Mind 'Champion of the Year' by the mental health charity, in recognition of her work at the Manic Depression Fellowship and her writing in *Pendulum*. She was also a central figure in Stephen Fry's documentary series *The Secret Life of the Manic Depressive* and now counts him as a friend along with the doctor and comedian Phil Hammond, who has supported her efforts "from the beginning".

Her book's message to the public and to the medical profession is that the way to mental health is to spend a little time focusing on how we feel and why we feel the way we do. Only then can we start to do something about it.

"I would dearly love to have that in the culture. It would help to give people control of their mental health instead of going to see counsellors or getting drugs from the GP. Understanding this has given me the tools I needed to change my own life."

Dr Miller's book **Mood Mapping** is available to purchase .

Flying My Own Plane

A bipolar book of poetry

.....

A BIPOLAR Aberdeen poet has had a book of his work published nearly a year after his death. David Murdoch was diagnosed with the mental health problem when he was 21. The condition can cause extreme mood swings. Many of the poems in his collection focus on living with the illness, which affects one in 100 people in Scotland.

The 43-year-old, who had a degree in theology from Aberdeen University, was a keen writer and poet. He regularly gave his mother Christine Wilkie his work to read. Now, almost a year after Mr Murdoch died after falling from Union Bridge in Union Street, Aberdeen, Mrs Wilkie has put together a collection of his 75 best poems in a book entitled *Flying My Own Plane*.

Topics covered include mental health, religion, and observations of life, romance and family. The book is currently available as an e-book, via Chipmunka Publishing, a website dedicated to literary works about, or by sufferers of, mental illnesses. It will also be available as a paperback by the end of the year.

Mrs Wilkie, of Pennyview, Oldmeldrum, said: "David was a deep thinker, always thinking about the meaning of life. "He was so critical about his poems when he was alive. "He would tell me there were better ones, and that he would get round to getting them published eventually. I don't know if he ever would have.

"I just hope the book will make a difference. He wanted to make a difference and be heard." A common symptom of bipolar disorder is manic episodes, where the sufferer may become overly optimistic, lose touch with reality or suffer from impaired judgment. It was as a result of one such episode that Mr Murdoch was diagnosed with the condition.

Mrs Wilkie and her husband, also David, called for more to be done to raise awareness of mental health problems. She said: "I just really feel for people who have bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia. People get angry at others who have a mental illness.

"We used to get angry with David sometimes because of how he behaved, but it's so difficult. People out there have to gain a better understanding of mental illnesses."

Flying My Own Plane is available by visiting www.chipmunkapublishing.co.uk and following the e-books link. For information about paperback copies e-mail alexe2@btinternet.com and all proceeds will go to mental health charity Sane.



Low Fat Eggnog

Ingredients

- 1/4 cup rum or rum extract (optional)
- 1 1/2 cups half-and-half
- 1/4 tsp nutmeg
- 1 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 1/2 cups milk
- 1/4 tsp cinnamon
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 4 egg whites
- 1 egg

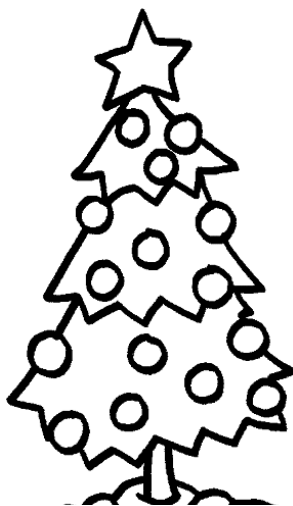
Preparation

Combine sugar, cinnamon and nutmeg in a large bowl. Add egg and egg whites, and beat with a mixer for 3-4 minutes.

Gently heat milk in a large saucepan. Gradually stir egg mixture into the hot milk. Heat, stirring constantly, until mix is slightly thickened. Stir in vanilla extract and remove from heat.

Let the milk and egg mixture cool a little before blending with fat-free half-and-half milk. Cover and chill in the refrigerator. Before serving, add rum or brandy if desired and sprinkle with freshly grated nutmeg on top.

Serves 4



What's on in Fife?

It's Vintage, Darling!

Featuring costume and dress accessories from the 19th century to the 1970s, this exhibition showcases the beautiful and the unusual. A chance to see some of the hidden gems in Fife Council Museums' collections.

St Andrews Museum
Doubledykes Road
St Andrews

07 Nov 2009 - 17 Jan 2010
During Museum opening hours
Free admission

Santa Clause Comes to Town

Early arrival of the 'big man' followed by a disco in Cowdenbeath Leisure Centre at 2pm.

Cowdenbeath Railway Station
Station Road
Cowdenbeath

Saturday 12 Dec 2009
13:00
Free admission



Come & Join ...

Bipolar Fellowship Scotland

Membership is open to anyone who has an interest in Bipolar Disorder and/or the need to increase understanding of the illness. Every new member strengthens the voice of those affected - if you have the illness, are a carer, friend, relative, a caring professional or an interested individual.

What membership offers:

- The Bipolar Fellowship Scotland regular newsletter On the Level Quarterly issues of the MDF The Bipolar Organisation's UK Journal—Pendulum
- Access to a wide range of information covering all aspects of bipolar disorder/manic depression at our lending library (no need to come to the office, we can post things out to you)
- Free entry to self help groups network events
- Access to the self management training courses
- Access to facilitators' training events if you are/plan to be an organiser of a self help group
- Free entry to our annual national conference
- Legal Advice Line
- Insurance Services

Please complete this page and send it to Bipolar Fellowship Scotland at the address below:

I enclose my membership fee (tick as appropriate):

Individual	0	£20.00
Unwaged Individual	0	£ 5.00
Family	0	£25.00
Corporate	0	£35.00

TOTAL ENCLOSED _____

NAME:

ADDRESS:

POSTCODE:

TEL:

E-MAIL:

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

Please make all cheques/postal orders payable to Bipolar Fellowship Scotland.

Studio 1015, Mile End Mill
Abbey Mill Business Centre
Seedhill Road
Paisley PA1 1TJ

Telephone 0141 560 2050
e-mail tildab@bipolarscotland.org.uk

Bipolar Fellowship Scotland
0141 560 2050
www.bipolarscotland.org.uk

Fife Families Support Project
01592 641401
www.fifefamilies.org.uk

Breathing Space Scotland
0141 435 3901
Helpline 0800 83 85 87
breathingspacescotland.co.uk

Drop-in Centres around Fife

Barony Housing Contact Point
0871 700 7777
rowangroup.org.uk/barony.htm

Fife Carers Centre
01592 642999
www.fifecarerscentre.org.uk

Express Group
01592 652975
Info@expressgroup.fsnet.co.uk

Depression Alliance Scotland
0131 467 3050
www.dascot.org

Going Forth
01383 623179
Goingforth@samh.org.uk

Scottish Assoc for Mental Health
0141 568 7000
www.samh.org.uk

The Cottage NSF Scotland
01334 657421
thefifecottage@hotmail.com

Advocacy in Fife
01592 772 220
fife@circlesnetwork.org.uk

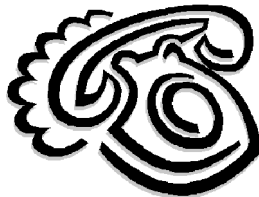
**ENeRGI (East Neuk Resource
Group Initiative)**
01333 730054
energirecovery@fiscalia.co.uk

Crisis Phone Lines

Breathing Space
0800 83 85 87

Social Work out-of-hours
01592 415000

Samaritans
08457 90 90 90



NHS Direct
0845 24 24 24

Saneline
0845 767 8000

Mind
0845 766 0163
