

Creativity and  
Social Support in  
Mental Health

Service Users' Perspectives

ROBERTA MCDONNELL



**Roberta McDonnell PhD**

**Creativity and Social Support in Mental  
Health: Service Users' Perspectives  
[2014, Palgrave]**

9781137345479

Jacket image Fiona McDonnell

Hardback and E-book at all Palgrave websites

Also available at Amazon

This book weaves together service users' lived experiences of creative activities such as art, music, reading and writing and how these resources can promote mental health recovery, particularly within social and community settings.

# Table of Contents

Foreword: The Story of this Book

Introduction: The Current State of Play

## PART I: IDEAS AND EVALUATION IN CREATIVITY AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

1. Creativity and Mental Health

2. Social Support and Daily Structure

3. Service Users in Perspective

4. Evaluation through Recovery Narratives

## PART II: MODES AND MEANINGS IN SERVICE USER EXPERIENCE

5. Arts and Crafts as Therapeutic Resources

6. Music and Song for a Sense of Well-being

7. Bibliotherapy and Reflective Journaling

8. Creativity and Social Support: A Combination Therapy

Conclusions and Recommendations, including an extensive Bibliography and a Guide to charities, support groups, websites and blogs on mental health recovery.

# Humans Tell Stories

- ❑ Stories are navigation tools for making sense of the world.
- ❑ They are created for meaning and direction.
- ❑ “We tell ourselves stories in order to live.”  
Rebecca Solnit [2013]  
*The Faraway Nearby*

# Storying Selfhood

- ❑ The experiencing Self as a dynamic personal narrative.
- ❑ Self experience can be re-narrated, re-interpreted, re-created.

[Vance Peavy 2006]  
*Sociodynamic Counselling*

# The Galway Study 2006

- ❑ Day Centre in a rural–village setting.
- ❑ Total immersion in daily routines.
- ❑ Participant Observation Ethnography.
- ❑ Thick Description of context.
- ❑ Articulating client voices.
- ❑ Ten out of thirteen clients interviewed.
- ❑ All related a story of illness and recovery.
- ❑ All said Centre was ‘Like a lifeline’.
- ❑ All cited social support and activities.

# Art as Therapy

- ❑ Everyone loved the weekly art class.
- ❑ Informal, run by an art teacher.
- ❑ Clients felt uplifted, proud of their work.
- ❑ Much social connecting, even withdrawn clients.
- ❑ Felt sense of improved confidence and self-esteem.
- ❑ Findings corroborated in many studies e.g.

Heenan [2006]; Sagan [2012]; Meeson [2012];  
Leenders et al [2011]

# Music and Well-Being

- ❑ Combined neuro-psycho-social effects.  
[Ushedo 2006; Tallis 2013]
- ❑ Both informal and formal participation have therapeutic effects.
- ❑ Music therapy a growing resource in mental health.
- ❑ Research is building across disciplines, both clinical and arts based.

McCaffrey et al [2011]; Lin et al [2011].



# Bibliotherapy

- ❑ Literature reading channels emotion.
- ❑ Poetry therapy – reading or writing it, “a life-affirming encounter.” [Tucker 2010]
- ❑ Fosters clients’ “unique personal voice.” [Kempler 2003]
- ❑ Creative journaling: enjoyment + meaning. [Cappachione 2002]
- ❑ Self-help books now prescribed by GPs.

# Further Resources in the Book

- ❑ Helpful directory of support groups, charities, websites and blogs.
- ❑ International in scope.
- ❑ A range of theoretical and methodological debates.
- ❑ Strong focus on service users' voices.
- ❑ Strong focus on qualitative methodology.
- ❑ Comprehensive policy recommendations.
- ❑ Extensive bibliography.
- ❑ Multidisciplinary relevance.
- ❑ Available at Palgrave, Amazon and all good bookshops.