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RTPublication

Recueilli par le programme de transition et de rétablissement
Assembled by the Recovery Transition Program

Renaissance



SIXTH EDITION WINTER 2022
Allan Memorial Institute and Griffith Edwards Centre

Renaissance

—Andrey Klyatskiy

After each eve comes a new dawn.
The sun peaks from beyond the horizon,
Its rays filling the world with light and life.
From a bough the leaves bloom,
Ending the winter's gloom.
Yet I feel myself a man reborn,
Sweet is the air I inhale this morn.
It infuses the blood running in my veins,
For a moment I can forget my pains.
The dew dresses and chills my bare body
And a sublime thrill runs through me.
Looking above, I see a chickadee
It too welcomes the Spring's warm embrace.
Am I in a dream, or is this world surreal?
Or perhaps it's even real?
In any case, I'll stay but for a moment longer.

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We would like to hear from you!

If you are or were a patient at the Allan Memorial Institute or the Griffith Edwards Centre, and are interested in joining the team or submitting work (photos, articles, poems, information on resources, original artwork, etc...), please contact us at rtpublicationzine@gmail.com





THE RE-CREATION
—Cecelia Vanier

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Welcome to the Sixth Edition

Just like the program that we represent, the zine team itself involves many transitions. We alternate our roles: taking minutes, contributing content, co-facilitating the meetings, etc. Over the last two years, we've said good-bye to some zine team members and welcomed new ones.

This past year has been particularly challenging to us all. Concepts such as "lockdowns," "mask mandates" and "social distancing" have become part of our everyday language as the COVID-19 pandemic impacted all aspects of our lives. Isolation from friends, family and co-workers and restrictions on daily activities have taken a great toll on our daily lives and we have all experienced and dealt with emotional and psychological difficulties.

However as the title "Renaissance" of this issue implies, there is hope on the horizon. With the roll out of vaccines, there is a rebirth of optimism. We have developed a new sense of what is important and what matters to us. We have adapted to our new reality with hope of rebirth.

The RTPublication Editors

If you are a present or former patient of the Allan Memorial Hospital or the Griffith Edwards Centre and would like to submit material to the RTPublication, please contact us by e-mail at rtpublicationzine@gmail.com

The RTPublication is also available on our website to read or to download and print recoverytransitionprogram.com/RTPublication

All submissions used by RTPublication will appear in our paper zine as well as in the electronic version on our website.

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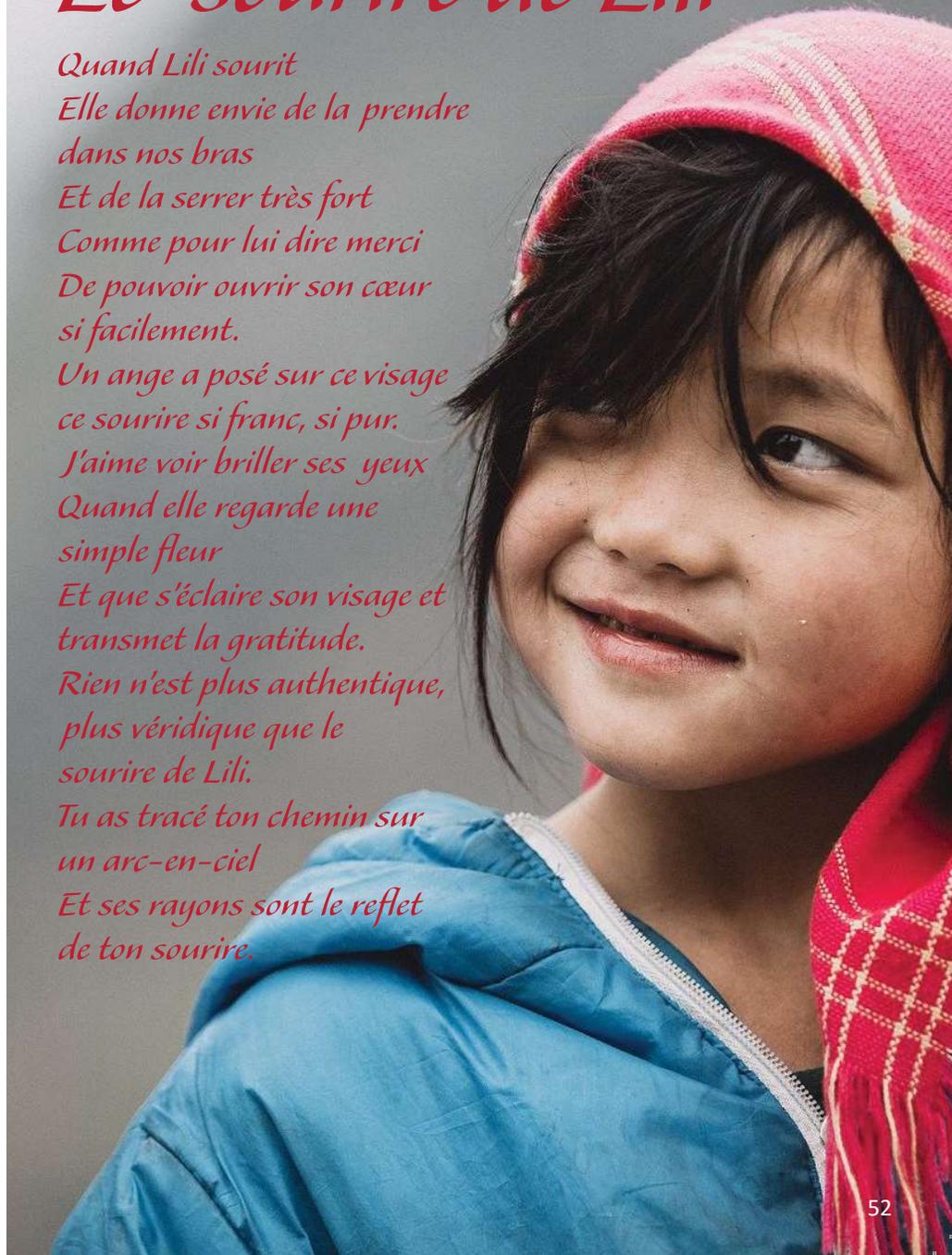
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Le sourire de Lili

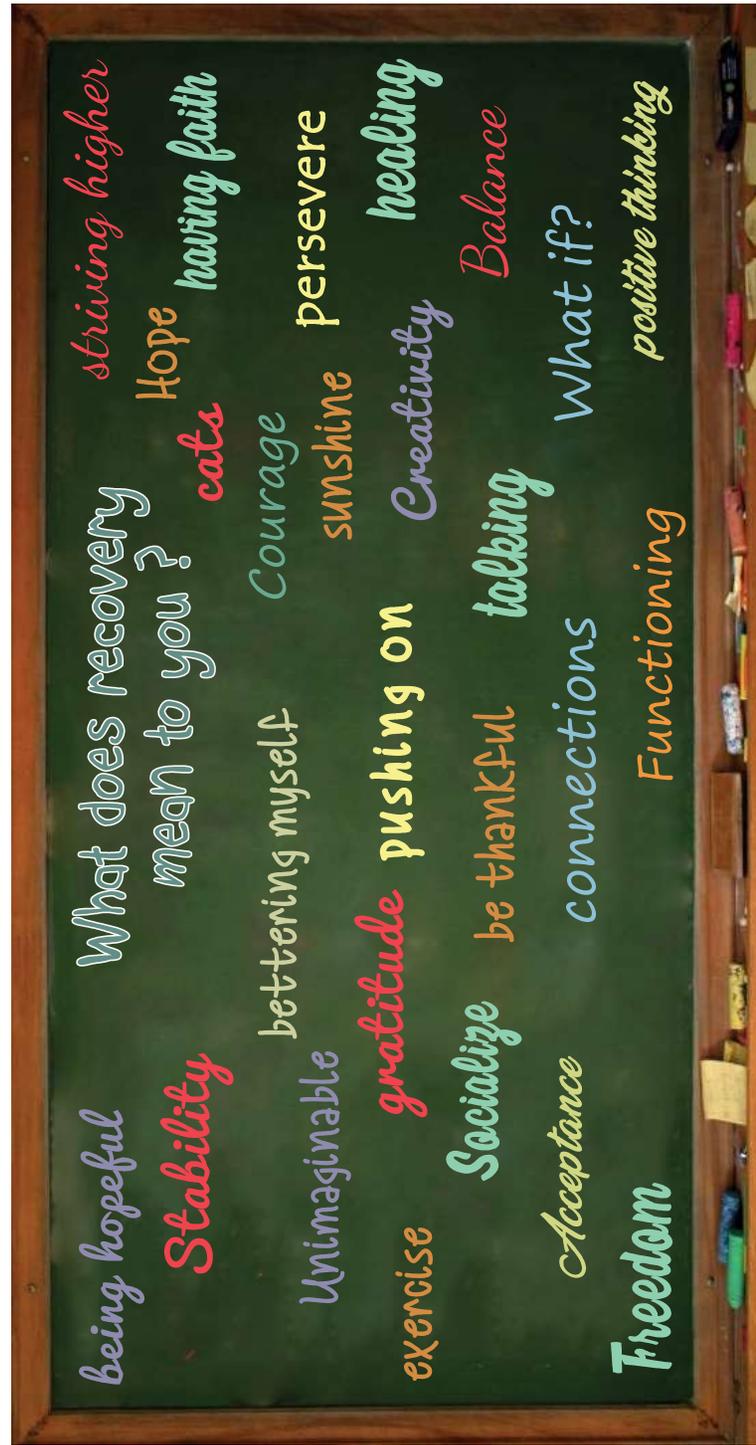
*Quand Lili sourit
Elle donne envie de la prendre
dans nos bras
Et de la serrer très fort
Comme pour lui dire merci
De pouvoir ouvrir son cœur
si facilement.
Un ange a posé sur ce visage
ce sourire si franc, si pur.
J'aime voir briller ses yeux
Quand elle regarde une
simple fleur
Et que s'éclaire son visage et
transmet la gratitude.
Rien n'est plus authentique,
plus véridique que le
sourire de Lili.
Tu as tracé ton chemin sur
un arc-en-ciel
Et ses rayons sont le reflet
de ton sourire.*



Paranoia pervading reality
 Crippling those it surrounds
 Motives approaching insanity
 No one lost or found.
 Lofty ideals falling
 The abuse of the spirit is appalling.
 Alone in seclusion
 Amid the confusion
 In this illusion
 Where there are no solutions
 Within these delusions
 Who can come to conclusions?
 Where the walls that surround can't be breached
 Only touched by imagination
 Where love and freedom are beyond reach
 Seen only by the mind's eye
 Not apparent to others
 But there just the same
 Where no one has a name
 Where no one is to blame
 For the hurt and the pain
 Where what is lost
 Can never be regained.

—MJD

STIGMA AND MYTH





Griffith Edwards Centre on Pine Avenue



RTP office in the Griffith Edwards Centre

5th Cohort!

—François Collins

Update: After training with the 5th cohort in 2020 and then mentoring at the Alan Edwards Pain Management Unit, Donnalyn attended the RTP Peer Mentor Training again in 2021. This time around she learned how to be a Peer Mentor Trainer. She is now part of a new team who are disseminating the RTP program into a new environment—the Alan Edwards Pain Management Unit. Congratulations, Donnalyn!

About the Recovery Transition Program

The Recovery Transition Program (RTP) is a unique mental health initiative designed to improve the experiences of patients within the Mental Health Mission of the McGill University Health Centre. Our goal is to integrate a patient-based mentoring program into the system of care, in which peer mentors and health care providers collaborate to provide support to patients during their recovery.

The Peer Mentor–Peer Mentee Relationship

We believe that experiential knowledge is an invaluable asset which allows those who live with mental illness and addiction to give hope and encouragement to others. The dynamic is different from that of a doctor–patient relationship: There is no diagnosis made and no obligation to disclose any previous diagnoses. We listen, but we are not therapists. The meetings are an occasion for contact that benefits the mentee and the mentor.

The mentor and mentee work together as equals to determine how the relationship can be most useful. The sessions can provide emotional support from someone who can relate to your struggles and who has been where you are now. The sessions can also provide a space to solve problems, set goals, establish new routines, and find connections to outside communities.

How to Become a Peer Mentee

Anyone interested in accessing the services of the RTP must be referred by their health care provider. For more information about the RTP, the referral process, or how to get involved, please see our website: recoverytransitionprogram.com and/or contact the RTP Coordinator at: Patricia.Lucas@muhc.mcgill.ca.



Congratulations

Last year, despite the pandemic, the Recovery Transition Program persevered and held its Peer Mentor training via Zoom—twice a week, for eight weeks, totalling 30 hours. We learned the rules and norms of mentoring, and did the role-play exercises, all of it online.

In November, with COVID-19 restrictions still present, we needed to give out the certificates to our new Peer Mentors safely. So rather than have a party at the Allan or at Griffith Edwards (as in the past), we improvised. Senior Peer Mentors who had trained the 5th cohort began hand-delivering certificates to the recipients at their homes, kind of like a “drive-by graduation.” It was a thrill to receive our certificates from the Senior Mentors. Most of us had never met them in person and only knew them through the virtual medium. As a special bonus, Donnalyn sent delicious, home-made cookies to go along with the certificates!



Allan Memorial Institute



RTP office in the Allan Memorial Institute

RTP Group Activities

In addition to one-on-one mentoring, the RTP organizes group activities to help mentors and mentees alike connect with each other and the greater community. Activities include:

- RTP Reads (a monthly book club)
- Group visits to outside resources such as the MMFA Art Hive
- The RTPublication workshop (the making of this zine)
- The staff & volunteer Garden Parties
- RAP, DIALOG, and SMART workshops
- Public awareness events (Pharmaprix Run, Montreal Walks, Mend Our Mind)
- Outreach & Dissemination (inviting other institutions to start their own RTP)
- RTPperformance! (musical and spoken-word performances for the community) eg. recording music in the MGH music therapy studio, performing for the Alzheimer Society of Montreal

See photos on our website (Past Events) or visit www.facebook.com/RTPProgram

How I see the RTP

“It goes so well, hand-in-hand, with the Phase 2 program, having someone remind you of the skills you are learning and sharing knowledge, strategies... helping each other evolve. Collaborating with a mentor gets you further with your recovery. I even think that mentoring should be mandatory for patients in Phase 2 at Griffith Edwards.”

—François T.

“I was able to talk to someone who went through exactly what I had gone through. She shared experience-based insights and showed me resources that could help.”

—Miranda O.

“Recovery requires all the help and support that you can get your hands on, even when you don’t realize you need it!”—Jennifer P.

Politics

Such a rush of feelings,
a flight of ideas.

The wheelings (and dealings)
the height of my fears.

The world banks its wings
and flies on lies...
back words.

—Elizabeth Irving-Waddleton

Photo by — Jennifer Maklary

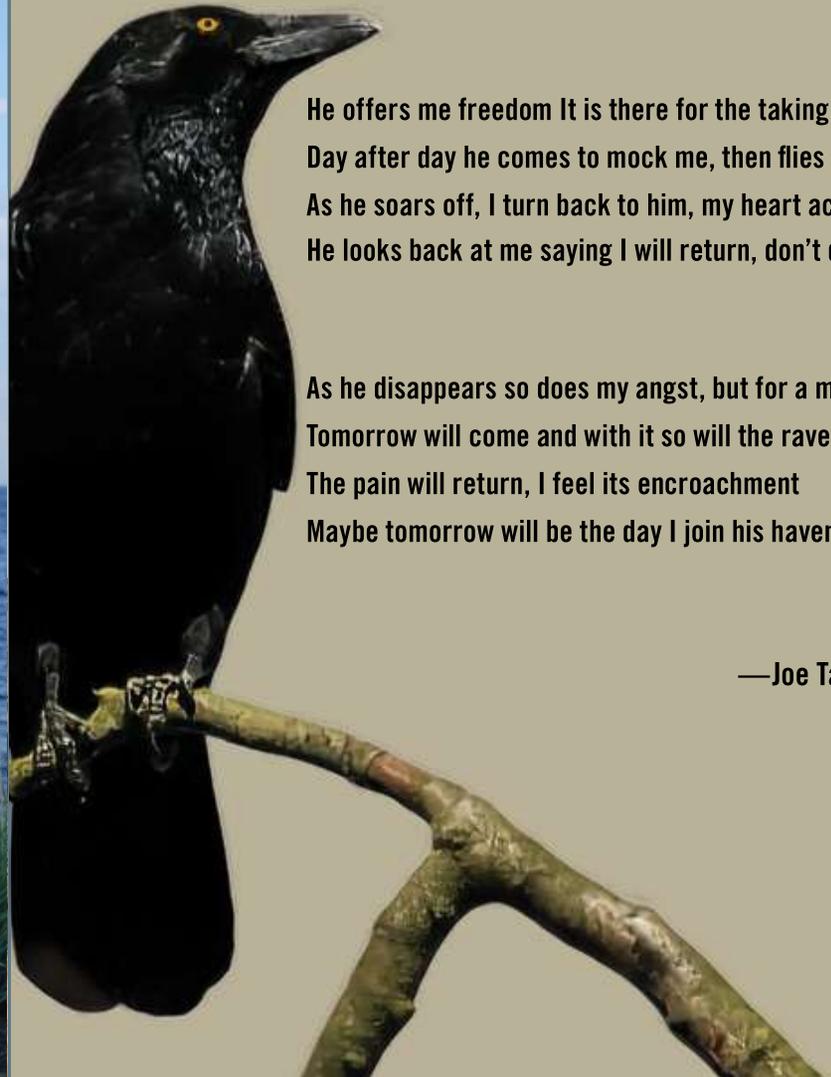
THE RAVEN

There's a black bird perched outside my window
With eyes of amber he stares, judging me
His leering gaze raises questions which leave me in limbo
Why have I not joined him he demands repeatedly

He offers me freedom It is there for the taking
Day after day he comes to mock me, then flies away
As he soars off, I turn back to him, my heart aching
He looks back at me saying I will return, don't dismay

As he disappears so does my angst, but for a moment
Tomorrow will come and with it so will the raven
The pain will return, I feel its encroachment
Maybe tomorrow will be the day I join his haven.

—Joe Tavares



LIFE'S JOURNEY

Lost in a sea of emotion
The battered ship that is my soul
Resting still all void of motion
In shattered pieces no longer whole
The vengeful wind no longer blows
Having left my sails in tatters.
Reflecting on my journey, the highs and lows
My fate no longer matters.
A change in direction reveals itself now.
The journey that I undertake
To forget the moment that we shared and how
For a time I feared no heartache.
And now I drift into the night
The stars no longer guide my way
All alone am I now, helpless in my plight
Looking for solace in God, I dread the dawning
Of another day, no beacon in sight
To comfort me during this time so bleak, the longing
Within me nurtured by a hope that once burned bright
No longer has meaning.

—MJD





UN PAS DE PLUS VERS LE BONHEUR

—Benoit Bolduc

C'était une journée triste à en mourir. Pendant que j'attendais en ligne au bureau de poste, un vieil homme était servi par une jeune femme. Je n'ai d'abord pas porté attention à ce vieil homme, tellement je ressentais l'impatience, et l'irritation me gagner. Et puis, j'ai perçu quelques mots qu'il adressait à la jeune femme : « Oh, vous travaillez ici à temps partiel, je ne vous ai jamais vu auparavant ? – Oui, répondit la jeune femme, très gentiment – Et que faites-vous la majeure partie de votre temps ? – je suis étudiante en graphisme. – Oh, dit le vieux monsieur, ça c'est intéressant, j'ai toujours eu à faire avec des graphistes, voyez-vous, j'ai été imprimeur toute ma vie. » Alors, pour une raison que je ne m'expliquais

pas sur le coup, j'ai continué à écouter le vieux monsieur, pas tellement les paroles qu'il prononçait, mais plutôt, le ton de sa voix. Il était si doux et tendre, comme s'il s'était adressé à un malade en grandes souffrances. Alors je me suis mis à écouter les mots de la conversation qu'il avait avec la jeune femme.

« Un de mes amis vient de décéder et j'envoie une carte de souhait à son épouse. Elle est à l'hôpital, elle a un cancer du sein très avancé. Je m'apprête à la visiter et à lui envoyer des fleurs. C'est le moins que je puisse faire, n'est-ce pas ? » Et il continua à parler à la jeune femme avec ce même ton de voix rassurant et rempli de tendresse. « Vous savez, cet ami, c'était mon meilleur ami. Il me manque tellement, parfois

The time goes by, it never stops
We'll have to wait things out, patiently, drop by drop
The sun will soon be out tomorrow
Showering down love, to erase all sorrow

I sit here as I think of you
Oh, how I wish to hear your music, as it moves
My soul it sings, a peaceful cry
With you around, you help me reach the sky

The mountains they surround, all around
The bears are hiding, in their home town
The rain it pours, down from the skies
Inside my heart, my future lies

Tomorrow, the sun will rise again
Showering glory, as it washes away my sin
Until that time, I must accept
And wait out the storm, trying not to get wet

My Sunflower, waits for me at home
He is content, with her, he was born
Together forever, that is their norm
When back I'll be, we'll weather all storms



Photo by—Jennifer Maklary

How I Wish

—Jennifer Maklary

Oh, how I wish, I'd be close to you
The rain is howling, nothing much to do
I wish I were home, enjoying your presence
In here it's cold, far away from any presents

Oh, how I wish, the rain would stop
I'd order from the menu, rainbows to drop
Sunshine for brightness, laughter for pain
Joy to fill our hearts, with youth again

je me surprends à lui parler comme s'il avait été là, tout près de moi. Il était généreux, gentil et prévenant. J'aimerais qu'il soit encore là, vous savez. Vous avez un très bon ami, demanda le vieil homme à la jeune femme ? – Oh, j'ai des tas d'amis, lui dit-elle d'un air désinvolte. – Oh, je vois. C'est bien d'avoir beaucoup d'amis, mais d'en avoir un qui vous est spécial c'est encore mieux, sauf que quand il part, on ressent un grand vide en dedans, en dehors aussi. »

Je n'avais jamais entendu une voix aussi douce et bienveillante. Et je me dis : « j'aimerais être comme ça, pourquoi ne suis-je plus capable de parler aux gens ? » Et du plus profond de mon cœur blessé, qui avait tellement de difficulté à s'attacher la sympathie des gens en ces temps de maladie dépressive, je ressentis de l'envie. Mais de l'intérieur, une autre voix mystérieuse qui était restée bien en vie me disait : « Cesse de te parler de la sorte. Sois gentil comme le vieil homme avec la jeune femme. « Es-tu capable de te parler comme le vieil homme parlait à la jeune femme ? » Je ne savais que répondre.

Puis je me dis, Je suis peut-être incapable de parler avec ce même ton de voix, mais je pouvais sentir la douceur des mots qu'il avait adressés à la jeune femme. J'avais senti la bonté de cet homme au plus profond de mon cœur. J'avais aimé cet homme; non seulement avais-je aimé sa voix, douce et apaisante, mais les mots qu'il avait dits aussi. Cette sensation, c'était là mon trésor. Cette capacité de sentir la beauté intérieure des gens n'était pas morte en moi. Peut-être pensai-je, que cette sensibilité pouvait servir de fondement pour ma vie. Même si cela n'était pas monnaie courante, ce genre de sensation n'était pas nouvelle pour moi. Ce qui était nouveau c'était l'acuité avec laquelle je l'avais ressenti dans un repli secret de mon cœur. Et cette sensation était en parfait synchronisme avec mon désir profond d'être heureux. Je crois que ce jour-là, j'ai fait un pas de plus vers le bonheur.

Just A Thought,

I am beautiful.
I am a work of art.
I am a work in progress.
I have learned to love myself.

—Jennifer Maklary

hard
DOESN'T
mean impossible

—Benoit Bolduc

Saying no to someone or something is so much easier when you realize that you're really saying yes to yourself. —Cecelia Vanier

“The more we express gratitude, the more things the universe will send into our lives to be grateful for.

—Jennifer Maklary”

EVEN IN
DARKNESS
THERE IS
HOPE

—Joe Tavares

Photo by—Jennifer Maklary

Thing of Wonder

*What is it with which we are born
Always open to someone's scorn
A smile it paints on a child's face
That which makes a warm embrace*

*Giving us light to heal our soul
It keeps us out of the darkest hole
The first casualty of any war
Which once lost, shall be no more*

*What is this thing of wonder
That which without we shall flounder
In the end it all makes sense
This thing of wonder we call innocence*

—Joe Tavares

Don't Ever Just Settle

—Jennifer Maklary

Don't you ever
Settle for less
You're part of the crop
You can make this your best

Don't cut yourself short
Leave yourself some slack
Don't take things so serious
This moment is right on track

Keep doing your best
That's the best you can do
If we all do our best
The world will halt it's curfews

Don't stay inside
Just go out and play
There is always someone to meet
The only person is you, in your way

The mindset is everything
All fears are unreal
Right now, we can rest
This magic, you can't steal

You might want to go out
Or you might choose to stay in
You've got a choice
Just choose with a grin

If you make no choice at all
That is a choice too
I'll keep that in mind
Stagnation and I are now through

Today I will play
This life is a gift
What can I learn?
In this world full of bliss

Goodbye...

Ring, ring, ring...
My eyes open
“Hello”
Comes a voice from the other room.

The taxi pulls up
No one says a word.
We enter the elevator
The doors shut and too quickly open.

It is eerily quiet.
A nurse approaches
And we follow her
Down the hall we walk

The door opens
Beeping sounds and idle chatter
Then they turn around
No one says a word

We know why we are here
And so do they
Then someone speaks
And it is confirmed

He is lying there
Eyes half open
We approach as one
And they all leave

Tears and cries
Fill the room
We glance at each other
Not much is said

We leave the room
One by one
My mom remains
For a final word

In another room
The rest of us sit
The door opens
“You should come“

Once more
We stand around him
The sobs are louder
The end is here

His eyes are closed
“I love you daddy”
My sister cries
My mom screams

The hand I hold
Has gone limp
It hits me now
It is not a dream

Three months
Is all it took
From diagnosis
To the end.

—Joe Tavares



If You Build It

—Cecelia Vanier

Who remembers the Kevin Costner movie, *Field of Dreams*, about a baseball diamond built in a cornfield? “If you build it, they will come” was the voice he kept hearing. The whole concept brings to mind another diamond in the rough that’s much closer to home, the Recovery Transition Program. What started as a dream for a handful of us, six years ago, has become a shining example of what recovery can look like and what the mental health community needs. Peers helping peers. Patients playing a stronger role in their own recovery and that of others.

In 2015, we dared to dream up the RTP and then strove to build it. At first, we had only a couple of health care providers willing to take the leap of faith and refer patients to our program. In time, word spread and more clinicians sent us more patients. So over the last six years, a steady stream of people have sought out the RTP: some looking for help, some offering their time and talents, all willing to participate and to play a part in the program. Many who were mentored



Quand je serai guéri

—Benoit Bolduc

Quand je serai guéri, on se retrouvera un midi, juste avant la séance du cinéma Beaubien, à ce café où les croissants sont soyeux et le café velouté. Tu porteras les perles que je t'ai offertes jadis pour ton anniversaire et ces pendants d'oreilles en forme de cornettes qui te donnent un air taquin et désinvolte que j'aime tant.

Quand je serai guéri, un jour, avant longtemps, je pourrai te dire les mots qui me restent dans la gorge quand je viens pour te dire « Je t'aime » et faire les gestes tendres qui se figent quand je viens pour te prendre.

Quand je serai guéri, ce sera la fête, les promenades dans le sous-bois à l'arrière du parc avec les enfants qui nous disent leur amour en criant et qui se chamaillent l'un contre l'autre pour se rapprocher encore plus près de nous.

Quand je serai guéri, je ne serai plus comme maintenant lorsque tu pleures, déçue et abandonnée de me voir si triste et désemparé.

Ce jour s'en vient. Ce sera le printemps, peut-être le prochain, je ne sais pas, mais je sais que ça viendra et je désire de tout mon cœur que tu sois encore là quand il viendra.

wanted to become Peer Mentors themselves. We actively recruited patients with an aptitude for empathy and a willingness to give back. To date, there have been 60 Peer Mentors trained and 210 patients mentored. Originally, we always met in person, but since the spring of 2020, almost all of our interactions have become virtual. We chose to adapt to the circumstances, rather than postpone our services.

Mental health care must evolve with the community. Since its inception, our hope was that the RTP could play a vital role in health care, that it could fill a gap that had been overlooked in the health care community. We were right. It turns out that people further along in their treatment enjoy helping others who are still adapting to care. Like the diamond, the RTP is multifaceted and attracts individuals for a variety of reasons. It can be the one-on-one Peer Mentoring, the workshops, the creation of the zine or simply the camaraderie that exists within the program. Whatever the attraction, there is one thing that makes everything possible—volunteering. Volunteering is the fabric of the program. It fills a basic human need that we all have—the need to give and to share. Ironically, giving of ourselves allows us to receive from others. This give-and-take makes us feel whole.

Here we are, six years later. We've had ups and downs and challenges, let's call them growing pains, because there's been a lot of growth: workshops, trainings, team building activities, Peer Mentoring, disseminating the program to the Alan Edwards Pain Clinic, zine after zine, including the one you're reading right now—you guessed it!—the sixth edition. Six years later and we're still together. Together, but six feet apart. I recently attended a Zoom meeting of the sixth cohort of Peer Mentors. Together, side-by-side on the computer screen, but several kilometers apart. It was their last day of training and they were excited, confident and ready for the task at hand. I felt reawakened and re-inspired by their optimism. I experienced a rekindled sense of commitment, a renaissance of hope. I felt I was a part of something whole, so much greater than the sum of its parts.

This pandemic has been very hard on all of us but it has also given us the time and opportunity to reflect on things that we may have neglected in the past. We have been given the chance to reassess and reprioritize what's really important. In late October, Carolyn Bennett became the first Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. The government recognized that mental health was a parallel pandemic affecting the population. This sent a message of hope to many of us. It said that the mental health of Canadians was worth safeguarding. Maybe it took a pandemic to get this idea across but it wouldn't be the first time that major improvements grew out of crisis situations.

We can all look for ways to improve things in our lives, as we continue to cope with our present circumstances. We can all make a commitment to not take things for granted, to take extra care of our own health and to check in on how others are doing. We can build a better world, where caring is contagious,

and if we build it...



The RTP Garden Party in September, 2017. Mentors, mentees and staff enjoy good food, conversation and summery weather.



Notes unheard before emanated from my small body, resonating with the world around me infusing every tree, every rock, every grain of sand. It rose to culminate in a crescendo of beauty directed by my will and my voice. With every passing moment I felt my body lighter and more exhilarated; I was reaching ecstasy, never have I thought I'd be able to feel something so intense...

I open my eyes. White ceiling, white walls, grey floor. I hear a beeping noise somewhere to the side. My body hurts. The door opens and a nurse comes in. She tells me something, but the buzzing in my head prevents me from understanding any of the words that she utters. I feel something in the palm of my hand. With a strain I turn my head, my fingers wake and flutter. It was a small feather.



All together in cyberspace at a Zine Zoom meeting in 2020.



Kindergarten 2.0, in 2016, was the first RTP workshop. It combined music with multimedia experimentation—fun, creative and very messy!



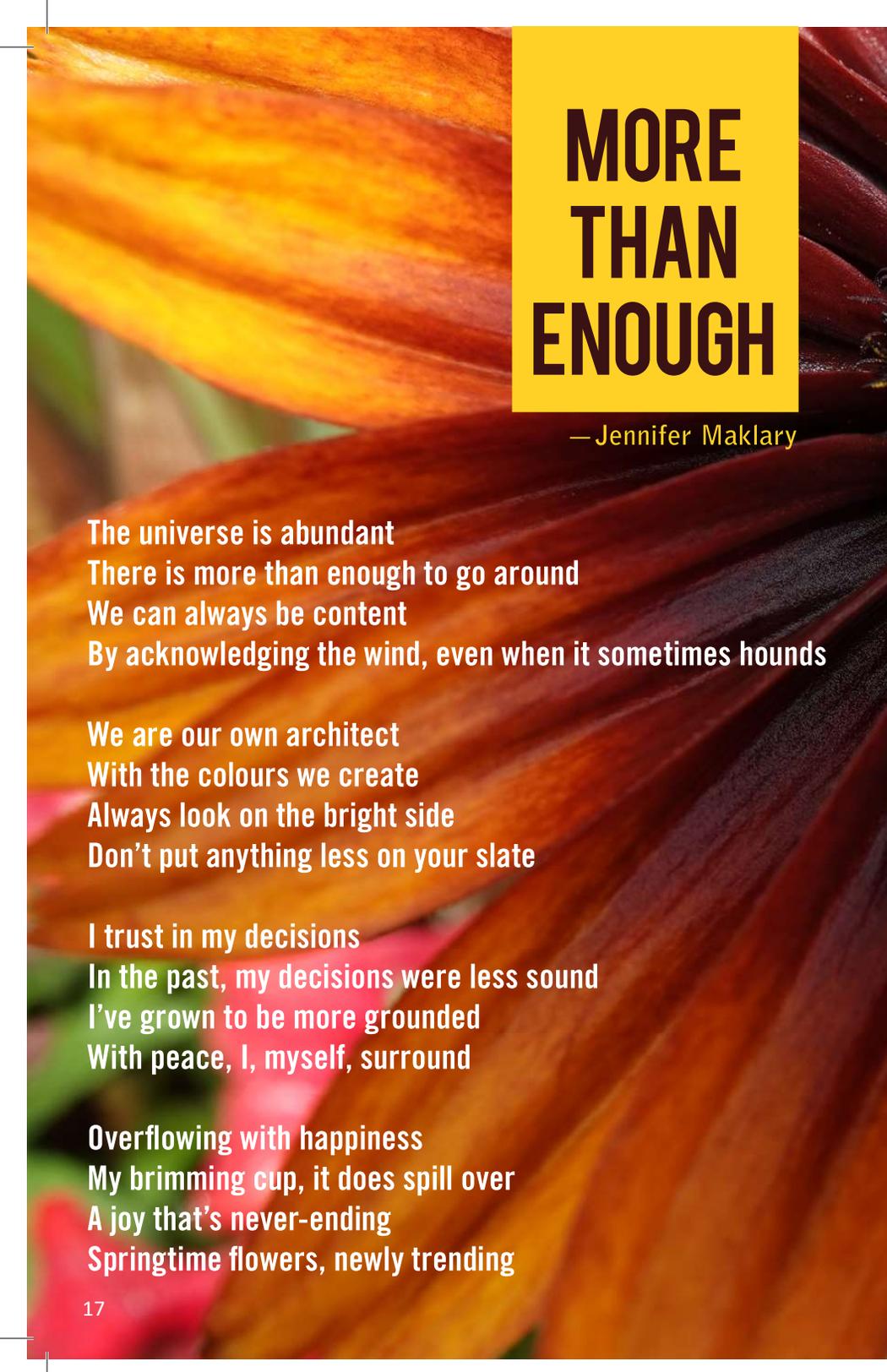
At the Pharmaprix Run for Women in 2019. Team RTP raised \$1,085 for Women's Mental Health initiatives!



Poster from our Second Annual Talent Show in April, 2018, where we pooled our talent and organizational skills to create an evening of magic.



Cecelia at Montreal Walks for Mental Health in October, 2016, helping to raise awareness while raising money for Chez Doris Women's Shelter.



MORE THAN ENOUGH

—Jennifer Maklary

The universe is abundant
There is more than enough to go around
We can always be content
By acknowledging the wind, even when it sometimes hounds

We are our own architect
With the colours we create
Always look on the bright side
Don't put anything less on your slate

I trust in my decisions
In the past, my decisions were less sound
I've grown to be more grounded
With peace, I, myself, surround

Overflowing with happiness
My brimming cup, it does spill over
A joy that's never-ending
Springtime flowers, newly trending

nearby there's a gurgling of water. Above me hang the branches of tall birch trees with sunshine playing between the small leaves and gently falling on the grass below. I reach for the bubbling water of the stream that passes through the grove. The water is cool and clear, taking a sip I feel it's cold embrace run through and rejuvenate my entire body. The water dripping from my face scintillated like little diamonds falling back into the stream. Each seemed to be a small world full of colors that danced around, mixing and creating new ones.

Lifting my head, I saw a bright yellow shine coming from beyond the grove. I walked slowly to it at first, surprised at how easy it is until I realized that I am running towards the glow with the ease of a deer. Reaching the trees' edge before me spread great fields of golden wheat bathing in the clear sky's sun. It was warm. Warmth which I haven't felt in ages. The soft and penetrating sensation that heats not so much the body as it does the heart and soothes the mind. I step forward and cut through the thickly growing stalks. The ticking of the wheat's beard on my naked fingers reminds me of memories long forgotten. Of how I used to play in fields like these as a wee laddie, chasing butterflies with friends and then playing hide and seek amongst the stalks.

I let my head fall backwards as gleeful, childish laughter burst from me. I laughed, for the first time in a long time I was laughing in the most innocent way. A laughter coming from within that can only be achieved rarely and through great happiness. One that is lost as one goes through calamities that comes with growing up. In the end, I let myself fall onto the wheat beneath me and looked up at the blue sky. Far above a single bird soared across my view. I closed my eyes to imagine what it's like to be one with the sky. A breeze softly brushed against my face. Upon opening my eyes, I was gliding on the winds thousands of feet above ground. I flew above an enchanting and everchanging landscape, plunging into a pine forest below where doe and rabbit hailed me and where fresh forest smells endeared me. And up again, to be greeted by snowy mountain peaks and fresh, clear air. After crossing the ridge, I found at its feet stretching, a great desert. It was interspersed with oases surrounded by nomad tents of vibrant colors. Enchanted by the beauty, I wanted to sing and so I sang.

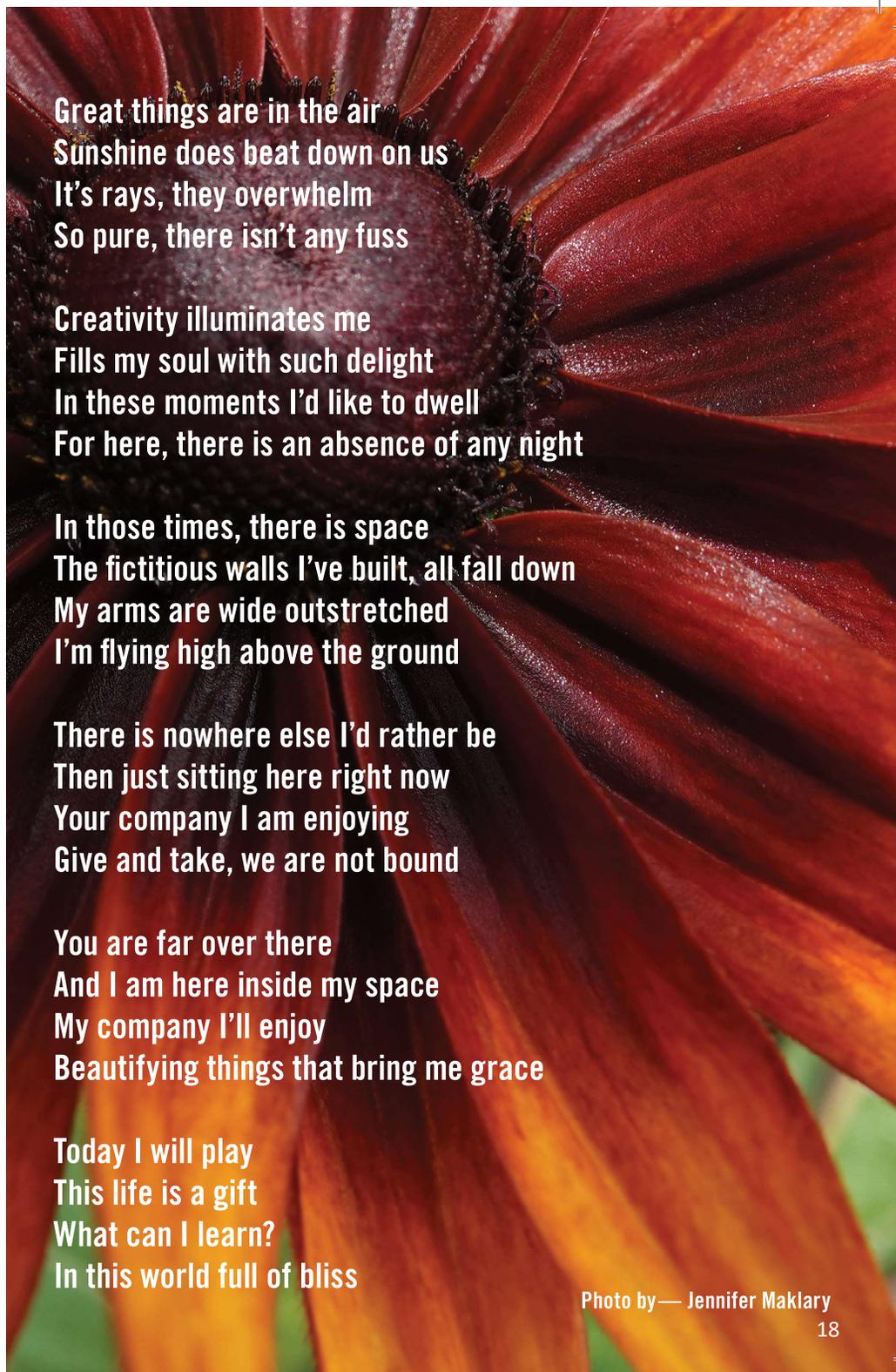


Recovery in a Dream

—Andrey Klyatskiy

I drank the remains of my cold tea and swallowed a bunch of pills then got on to write my daily journal. Another day, another evening, another cycle. Every-day's the same, seeing people, doing things and then going home, drowning in my own misery. Again, I saw monsters on the subway today, or "hallucinations" as my therapist tells me to call them. They haven't seen me because I hid pretty well, but the effort was excruciating. Not so much to hide, but from the anxiety that had taken a hold of me. Once home I locked myself in my room, fearful of being pursued and spent the rest of the day trembling nervously while trying to find something to distract myself with. Now I wait for the next day to come, hoping in vain that something different happens to me as I ready for another therapy, another meeting with my case-manager, another lousy group discussion. They say it's for my recovery, well I guess they know better, the professionals. Yet there's little results thus far. Sure, I have less hallucinations than before, now those that remain are the most horrifying ones. It has gotten to a point where it's difficult for me to even imagine what life after recovery can be. I am pinned by this disease, crushed under its weight to the point where at times it becomes difficult to breathe. Before, I used to arduously fight it, yet it was a war of attrition in which my side was understaffed and unfed. Looking at the time, I grab my sleeping pills and take enough to knock me out then proceed to bed.

Darkness engulfed me, I was floating in an abyss, waiting for the sweet embrace of sleep to take me. Yet something was different. I saw a glimmer approaching me quickly from the distance. No. I was falling towards it! I tried to shout yet could not utter a peep. Meanwhile the glimmer was becoming a colossal beacon of light that erased the abyss around me. Opening my eyes, I found myself lying on hard ground. Somewhere



Great things are in the air
Sunshine does beat down on us
It's rays, they overwhelm
So pure, there isn't any fuss

Creativity illuminates me
Fills my soul with such delight
In these moments I'd like to dwell
For here, there is an absence of any night

In those times, there is space
The fictitious walls I've built, all fall down
My arms are wide outstretched
I'm flying high above the ground

There is nowhere else I'd rather be
Then just sitting here right now
Your company I am enjoying
Give and take, we are not bound

You are far over there
And I am here inside my space
My company I'll enjoy
Beautifying things that bring me grace

Today I will play
This life is a gift
What can I learn?
In this world full of bliss

RTPublication is a tool for sharing collected works contributed by members of the Mental Health Mission patient population (poetry, photos, etc) and information about mental health, giving a voice to the patient population.

Here is the Zine Team— The people who create and put RTPublication together.

I am a 41 year old writer, Peer Mentor and member of the Zine Team. I was born in Montreal, lived in Houston for 30 something years and was educated in Texas, Louisiana and Ontario.

I have been part of the RTPublication zine for nearly two years and feel like the zine and the whole RTP are a family (like the title of our last edition). We have all bonded together, even if it has been virtually since the pandemic, through weekly Zoom meetings.

Before I moved back to Montreal and joined the RTP, I hadn't found any direction in terms of what to do. The zine and RTP helped me figure that out.

—**François**



I have been a mental health consumer since 1984, I am now 61. I have always put pen to paper in the arts and built my life as an engineering technician/artist-writer. I joined the Zine Team after being given a copy of RTPublication "The Waiting Room", consisting of creative art and writings done by mental health consumers, along with articles acknowledging staff members who lead consumers through the mental health journey. It was just before the "Family" issue was out in print that I got a taste of the Zine Team experience. We meet once a week through Zoom on the internet to put out the RTPublication, it has been a growing and rewarding experience. It is a connection with peers rather than being alone, and compliments the services provided by traditional mental health care providers.

As a member of the Zine Team, I've had the opportunity to expand my Doc GM signature fan base.

—**Doc GM**

The Brick Layer

Lulled by my ignorance, you were a stranger.

Wretched conversations in the mirror and there you greeted me,

Promising safety from the terrors of the night.

I shook your hand and abdicated my throne.

You were exalted and you built mighty walls.

But you deceived me.

Your judgments unforgiving, your punishments gruelling.

You are not the torch bearer; you are what lurks beyond the light.

The walls that gave me comfort are now too great to see beyond.

I am not protected, I am trapped.

I wish you gone.

— E.Z.



This is why NVC learning is done best in supportive ongoing groups of those who are motivated. I have also found that studying the book(s) alone has been a useful tool in self-development, and there are many good lectures available on youtube if you Google NVC, or Rosenberg, or Cup of Empathy. Peer Mentors who already have an excellent overview of Communication in their training, may add elements of NVC to further enrich themselves and their work with mentees and fellow Peer Mentors.



Rosenberg Marshall B. *“ Nonviolent Communication : A Language of Life”*. PuddleDancer Press, 2015, 3rd. Edition

(2) Rosenberg Marshall B. *“ Living Nonviolent Communication : Practical Tools to Connect and Communicate Skillfully in Every Situation”*. SOUNDS TRUE. Boulder, Colorado. 2012. pp 143.

Being part of the zine means much, especially the opportunity to work with a team of great individuals in perfect harmony. It is also a great opportunity to be heard in what we have most intimate. That means you have to trust and that the people you talk to deserve that trust, which is the case with the Zine Team. I'm not afraid one bit to open up to my comrades in the zine.

I wasn't with the team very long before we switched to Zoom meetings, but there is a moment that I cherish particularly from our in person meetings. It was on my very first meeting with the zine team and I read something I just wrote in the day hospital art session just a few hours before. It was just a piece of rough handwriting in English on rough paper and everyone agreed to publish it right away including the syntax and spelling mistakes (I'm French, don't forget). Then I thought Wow, wow, wow! I got to be part of that gang and I joined right then.

—Benoit Bolduc



Four years ago, my work as a Peer Mentor ended while my commitment to RTP Fundraising was ramping up. By joining the Zine Team, I was able to showcase what the Fundraising Committee was up to—promoting upcoming events and reporting back on how we did. I also had the pleasure of interviewing various staff members and sharing their stories with our readers.

Helping produce a zine edition, from theme conception to fully edited, finished product, is one of the most fulfilling things I've done. The sense of satisfaction we all get, flipping through the pages of a brand new “hot off the presses” edition is well worth the time invested.

I'm proud of all the work we've done. However, “Take 2”, the 2nd edition, was my personal favourite. In it, I wrote about the Griffith Edwards Centre, a place that helped save my life. The zine also featured a poem I wrote following the death of a loved one. Putting those words and that image onto paper helped me to process my grief and marked an important transition in my life.

—Cecelia Vanier



When I first arrived at the Zine Team I was hanging by a thread. Life had taken some unexpected turns and I was left dealing with tragedy upon tragedy while trying to remain sane. As much as I wanted to join, I was concerned that I would have nothing to contribute to this very impressive body of work, so I never dared. Poetry? Drawings? Paintings? Articles? Photography? Meeting new people? What if they don't like me? What if I don't like them? Life is challenging enough as it is.

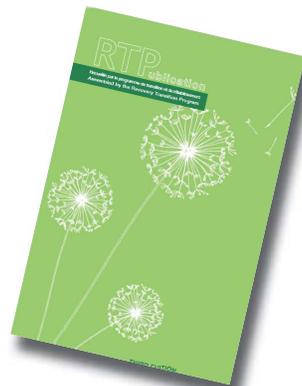
Unbeknownst to the Zine Team, they helped me to realize one of my greatest dreams...to express my feelings through writing. They have more faith in me than I could ever have in myself and they make me feel as though I can reach for the sky.

COVID couldn't stop production of the 5th edition, if anything, it strengthened the team. In addition to the physical zines that were published, a digital version with a special launch was introduced in 2021! My only regret is that I wish I had joined sooner.

—Bess

Being part of the Zine Team has had a tremendous impact in my life. Since day one, I was welcomed with open arms and made to feel part of the team. The Zine Team is like family to me. Zine meetings are a place where I feel I fit in, I can be understood, and there is no judgment from any of the other members as to how we are feeling or the artistic work we are sharing. It is a place where we encourage one another to do our best, and share artistic work we have been creating. I am very thankful to all of the Zine Team members I have met, each one of them has had a positive impact in my life. Each week, I leave the meeting feeling inspired, uplifted, and ready to create some new artwork. Each person has something to bring to the team, and it is a pleasure working with everyone. It is a privilege to be part of RTPublication, thanks to all the team members

—Jennifer Maklary



To counter this trend, which discourages openness and vulnerability, we have Rosenberg's course, along with a growing subculture of meditation and other spiritual practices. I believe Rosenberg used the term "Nonviolent Communication" in order to wake us up to the ways we were being influenced. However its alternate name, "Compassionate Communication" actually describes the aim and method.

The course offers four main steps to communicating in a way that intends to make a positive connection. Instead of being just another quick fix, it requires and fosters self-awareness in the user.

Observation:

Can you look at the situation, and another's behavior in a way that does not judge or make presumptions?

Feelings:

Can you identify the feeling this situation arouses in you?

Needs:

What is your need or important value that has provoked the above feeling?

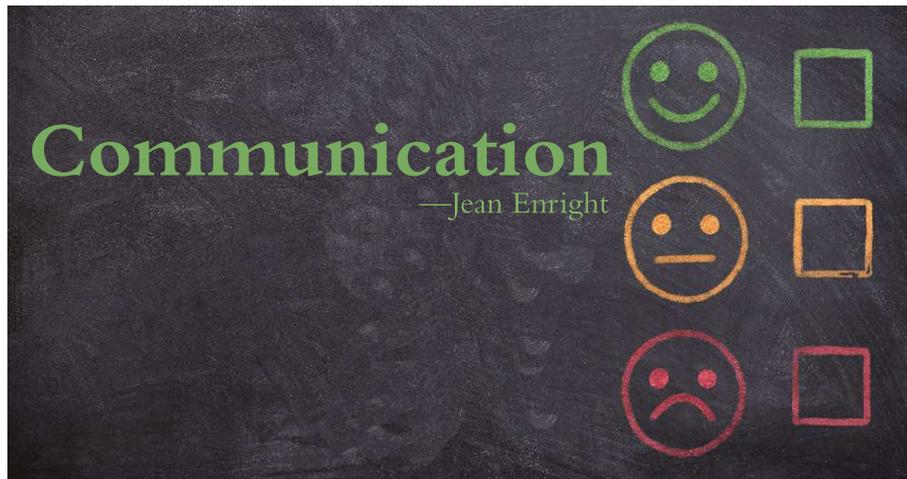
Make a Request:

Can you decide what it is you DO want, and request it in the form of a specific and concrete action?

Example using the four steps:

"When you enter my office when the door is closed (1) I feel frustrated (2) because I need to concentrate on my work (3). Would you be willing to wait until the door is open, or email me?(4)"

These steps seem pretty straightforward, but we found that applying them in situations was quite complex, and required discussion, self-awareness, and explicit or implicit consent between the communicators. And, as Rosenberg states "I think it is important that people see that spirituality is at the base of Nonviolent Communication and that they learn the mechanics of the NVC process with that in mind. It's really a spiritual practice that I am trying to show as a way of life." (2)



A small word that opens the big door to the world of interpersonal relationships. Why do we need courses on “Communication” after centuries of developing our use of language? The recent pilot workshop in RTP, based on *Marshall Rosenberg’s Compassionate or Nonviolent Communication*, demonstrated how difficult it is to talk about communication without realizing how we are affected by our society’s norms, values, and education methods.

For example, in the public sphere we have :

Words as weapons:

Put-downs, one-upmanship, and the blame games of politics. This public sport is enjoyed by many thanks to prime time TV. Then there is hate mail, where people can vent anonymously.

Words that deceive:

We have “food insecurity” instead of being poor or starving.
 We have “consumers” in mental and other health care, which implies shopping amongst choices.
 Instead of lying, politicians can now suffer from “leniency with the facts”.

Words that can get you fired:

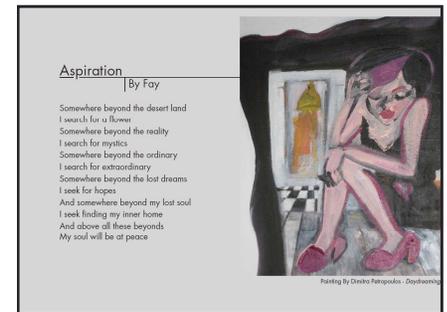
We have “politically correct” words to make up for societal abuses, and we seem to enjoy catching and punishing people when they blunder. The new calling-out culture uses naming and blaming in the guise of correcting behavior.

The zine and the Zine Team mean a great deal to me. The zine itself is a progressive art form which has allowed me to develop and put into practice my graphic design degree and share personal experiences. The Zine Team, a group of inspiring, creative and supportive members has become a source of moral support and compassion. It is a group that rallies around each other to offer a community of hope. It has provided me with the opportunity to work together with other like-minded individuals to produce something which is appreciated by others, and that makes me feel good about myself.

Over the past few years I have learned a lot, not only about production and design but about the complexities that come from being part of and working within a group. I have developed the confidence to call myself a graphic designer and for that I am grateful to the RTP and the zine.

My fondest memory of being a part of the zine was the first time I held a physical copy in my hands, and experienced the joy it brought to all involved.

—Joe Tavares

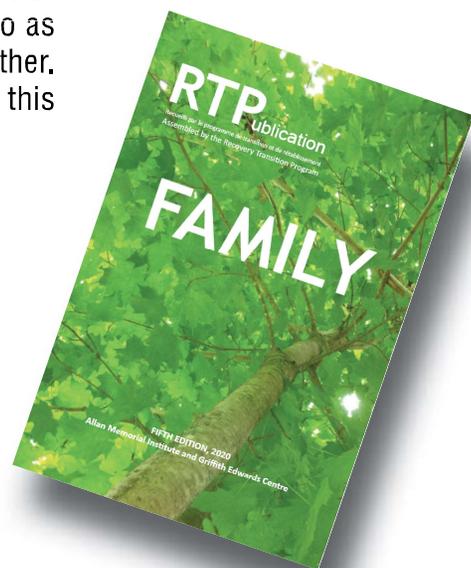


I have been with the Zine Team for a year or two. I joined during a rather difficult time in my life but with the support of the members who encouraged me to bring out my art in writing it helped me get better. The team is a true family, we all encourage each other to share our art and it is tremendously inspirational to see and discuss the different pieces we receive. We also persevered with our meetings through the pandemic by conducting online sessions and thus were still able to produce the 5th edition of the zine. One of my fondest memories is when I was working on the video for the 5th edition launch. There were some difficulties in making it, as with any big project, but it was really rewarding to see others react to the new versions of the video as it was gradually coming together. I am really glad to be part of this wonderful group of people.

—**Andrey Klyatskiy**

Having joined the Zine Team early in the pandemic, any face-to-face interactions were cut off. For a group of individuals whom I have never met in person, the level of care, commitment, and consideration towards every member has been quite astounding to me. I am grateful to have found the zine. There is a genuine desire to listen and uplift every member and there is value in that. My fondest memory in the zine involved an ice-breaker question regarding our music preferences during one of our meetings. It became apparent that many of us shared similar tastes and a smile came upon all those who were present.

—**Eric Zimmermann**



Look at me,
No!
Not like that!
At me
Not at the way my
curves fill my chiffon dress
I am so much more than
a woman for you to possess.
I am an adult, a child, an x-wife
Inside me lurks a soul, a scar, a life
Please look at me
Don't be blinded by my mistakes
Don't be fooled by my smile. It is just a
brave attempt to reconcile
myself with the world.
And don't stare at my tears too long
unless you can swim, you may drown in them.
Now put the judge inside you
away and look at me!
I am a story willing to be told
A soul seeking redemption
for a sin I did not commit.
Forgive me with a leap of faith
and look at me once more.
Only then will you know how much
I yearn to be seen, to be touched, to be loved.



The Call

—Caroline

Image by—Caroline



Greg

We go back a long way together
Introducing each other to different art forms and writing styles
One of which was poetic penship with our friendship
To capturing visual displays together on paper
Or it was with a black and white camera eye
The streets of Montreal was ours
To prowl with our low mental health budget
We tried challenging each other at chess
While sipping our own favorite coffees
He had no guitar but I put mine in his hands to play
Accomplished at it he was with many a melody
Once on one of our “tour de villes”
We descended on a war memorial for our vets
Coffeeing it and sketching the landmark
Discussing our own mental health war
He is not with us any more
But he is remembered through our art, music and writings

—Doc GM

La plus belle journée du siècle

—Benoit Bolduc

Quelques nuages immaculés filaient dans le ciel à vive allure; le vent gonflait le feuillage des arbres tel des vagues gigantesques. Le vert tendre venait tout dernièrement de faire place au vert chatoyant de la nature mature et le bleu du ciel était tellement clair qu'on aurait pu voir voler un aigle à vingt mille pieds d'altitude.

Michel et moi marchions lentement côte à côte, se laissant porter, insouciant et bavard sur la rue Prince-Arthur. J'étais bien d'être là, avec lui. Sa présence était toujours d'un grand réconfort pour moi, car Michel, malgré ses 87 ans, était solide dans sa tête comme le rocher de Gibraltar. Il me ramenait sur terre. Juste d'être là, à côté de lui, me garantissait que la vie en valait la peine. Et je songeais : « Qu'allais-je devenir sans lui ? Où vais-je aller, à qui vais-je parler ? Mais malgré ces pensées inquiètes qui tourbillonnaient dans ma tête, je me sentais bien, comme si je profitais de sa présence à fond en ce jour lumineux qui s'offrait à nous.

Nous marcherions jusqu'au carré Saint-Louis et allions nous taper un bon café fort avec un croissant, ou peut-être une pâtisserie de

Samuel. Elles étaient délicieuses ces pâtisseries, probablement parce qu'on les mangeait ensemble Michel et moi, dehors sous les arbres avec les écureuils, les pigeons et les moineaux comme compagnons.

Mais, à notre arrivée au parc, grande déception: le kiosque de Samuel était fermé. J'ai lu la déception sur le visage de Michel. Je n'ai fait ni un ni deux et lui ai dit de ne pas bouger, que j'en aurais pour quelques minutes seulement. Michel s'est assis sur un banc à l'ombre des grands arbres du carré et je suis parti à la course à travers le parc en direction de la station de métro Sherbrooke où je savais que la pâtisserie française Saint-Louis de France était ouverte.

Je suis revenu avec deux grands cafés, du sucre en masse (Michel aime son café avec au moins 8 sachets de sucre) et deux larges biscuits à la confiture que nous avons dégustés en parlant de choses et d'autres et plus particulièrement de notre réunion d'étude bouddhique du mois de juin. Tout cela était parfait.

Et puis vint l'heure de se quitter. Michel ne laissait jamais Adèle, son



A HILL BETWEEN TWO TREES

The hill is SOLID rock TO BE mined.
AND The Trees are GOOD TIMBER for felling
To keep The hill and fell the trees
Or to mine the hill to keep the trees
It is all so hazy in black and grey,
feeling so lost which is lesser of the two
which of the two yields the most
Or a bit of both to save the rest
It is still all hazy in black and grey
What is best for me that's not so hazy

Doc G M

Did you research this play list specifically for Denise's character?

Yeah, so if I liked a piece, I thought she would like it too.

Do you use music as a form of therapy in your life?

It depends on how I'm feeling. I listen to music that reflects my emotions, so that's good self-care. But when I'm suffering with cluster headaches (something that I deal with) then listening to music is out of the question.

Aside from music, do you have something in common with Denise?

Yeah, we are both stubborn.

We couldn't get enough of the love scenes between Denise and Ethan. Were you thinking of a real-life couple when you wrote those passages?

Actually, I based them on old classic movies like "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" and actors like Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn.

François Collins, is an RTP mentor, RTPublication zine member and contributor and author of *'Fire at the Lepine Apartments'* a fast paced thriller that lives large on the page and the memory. With forceful prose and sharp narratives, this novel's energy, innuendos, and wit are never-ending.

There are a handful of French names throughout your book. Is this a nod to your Quebecois heritage?

Yeah, and also some other names come from classmates I knew down south.

François, we see many layers of you in this book: knowledge of music, art, emotions, law, even finance. Where does such a wide spectrum of knowledge come from?

I think it was how I was raised. My parents taught me a lot and provided a highly cultured environment. Because of them, I have dual citizenship, and I benefited from both their worlds.

épouse, très longtemps seule à la maison. Elle s'inquiétait toujours beaucoup pour lui. Je crois qu'ils s'aimaient profondément ces deux oiseaux-là, ça se sentait quand il parlait d'elle. Il avait toujours un mot tendre pour elle. Celui qui revenait le plus souvent était qu'elle avait bon cœur, et j'étais d'accord et je comprenais pourquoi il l'aimait. Et bien que j'aurais aimé rester plus longtemps avec lui, je n'ai dit mot et me suis résigné à rentrer à la maison.

"Sa présence était toujours d'un grand réconfort pour moi."

Le chemin du retour ne fut pas aussi gai qu'à l'aller cependant, car je savais que j'allais rentrer seul chez-moi. Mais bon, toute bonne chose doit avoir une fin. Pourtant cette fois-là, je voulais faire durer le plaisir. Mais je ne savais trop comment. J'attendais l'autobus sur la rue Park et me demandais ce que je pourrais bien faire pour que cette journée de rêve continue jusqu'à la nuit.

Et c'est là que j'ai eu une idée de génie : j'allais rentrer à la maison, ranger mon petit sac d'emplettes que j'avais acheté chez le libanais et ressortir avec ma guitare sur le dos. Je me rendrais au parc au coin de Sagard et Jean-Talon et j'allais jouer quelque chose. Je n'avais pas touché à ma guitare depuis quelque

deux ans, mais depuis la venue du printemps, chaud et précoce, j'avais des fourmis dans les doigts. D'autant plus que depuis la réunion de la revue Zine, une revue en santé mentale auquel je participais comme écrivain, et à laquelle j'avais assisté, je savais que nous avions besoin d'une musique de fond pour accompagner la version numérique de notre revue sur la covid-19. Ma motivation s'en voyait augmenté d'autant. Et quelle ne fut pas ma surprise de me rendre compte que je savais encore jouer, ce dont j'avais très sérieusement douté dernièrement. Je suis resté là, parmi les enfants, les joueurs de pétanque, les mamans, les papas, les chiens, les chats et les pigeons, pendant à peu près une heure trente, juste le temps de peaufiner une pièce instrumentale que je crois devrait convenir à notre revue.

Puis je suis rentré chez-moi, j'ai acheté une bière sur le chemin du retour et en arrivant, je me suis mis à écrire la petite histoire de la plus belle journée du siècle.



Photo by — Jennifer Maklary

Fire at the Lepine Apartments

an interview with the author

What was your process in writing this book?

Creating an outline and organizing my material. It was waking up in the morning, and staring blankly at the screen until the thoughts popped up.

How long did it take to write it?

A year, from beginning to end. A year, reading and rereading the notes that I wrote.

Did you write everyday, did you take breaks in between?

I tried to write every other day, I tried to be very persistent. By following a routine, it helped with my depression.

So, it helped with the depression?

Yes, it helped me get out of it, it gave me something to do. Part of my recovery is that I need to keep myself occupied so that I don't relapse. I certainly didn't want to go through that again!

What inspired you to write the book?

I was on my couch with a friend at my apartment one day, watching an episode of Law and Order, and I was getting annoyed with the show. I said I could write better material than that, so my friend told me, "Well, put up or shut up" and I said "Well, okay." So instead of feeling sorry for myself, I started writing.

Did you consider it an encouragement from your friend or a dare?

I think it was a dare.

Did you show it to him when it was finished?

Yes, I even included his name at the end.

Did you have any obstacles writing this book?

Yes, getting motivated. With depression you don't feel like doing anything.

— Benoit Bolduc and Bess

How did you motivate yourself?

I tried to get and stay busy. I forced myself to "just do it." Trying to find things to do — that was the only thing I could do to get out of my depression.

How did you create such realistic love scenes and dialogues? Do you consider yourself a romantic person?

I thought of the most intimate relationship someone could have and decided to see if I could put it on paper. The hardest part in writing about that was being precise.

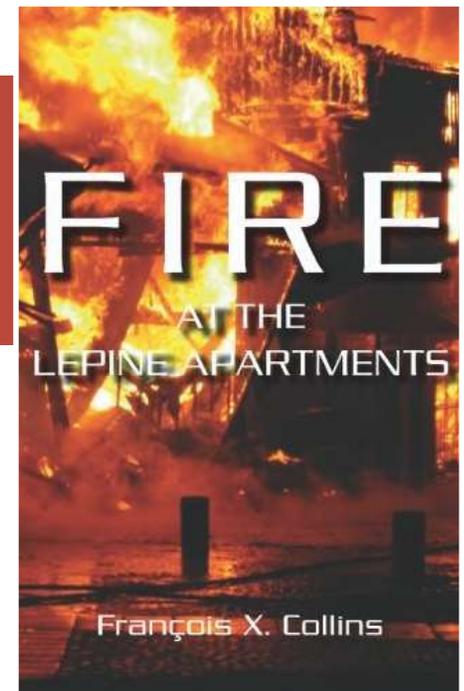
Did you have any examples to draw from?

Not really, other than my parents. I think it was by observing my parents.

Do you consider yourself a feminist?

I think so. I was raised by a strong and powerful woman, my mother, so yes I do.

Aside from your mom, did anyone else in your family stand out as a strong and powerful character?



Not really while I was writing the book. When I was writing, it was just my mother, but recently I have discovered one of my female cousins to be pretty strong.

How were you able to sustain such character consistency?

Because it's based on real life and also, of course, I used my biggest tool, my imagination.

Denise has a very eclectic taste in music. Do you listen to the same music?

Pretty much. I'll listen to many types of music depending on the mood I'm in. If I'm in a sad mood I'll listen to very sad music. If I'm energetic, I'll listen to pop, if I feel sleepy, I'll listen to something relaxing. So it depends on the mood I'm in, I have always loved listening to music.

'If it wasn't for the keen police work of homicide detectives, James Bixby and Ethan Snow, and the unmistakable bullet holes in one of the many victims, someone might have gotten away with murder.'