

Life Beyond the Cocoon

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MHMA
Mental Health in Multicultural Australia

Who We Are

Evan Bichara

Multicultural Consumer Advocate working at Victorian Transcultural Mental Health Centre, and member of the MHiMA National CaLD Consumer Working Group.

Áine Tierney

Multicultural Carer and Consumer Advocate, MHiMA National CaLD Consumer and Carer Support Officer, member of the MHiMA National CaLD Consumer Working Group.

Speaking from our professional and personal lived experience of mental illness and knowledge of the mainstream and multicultural mental health sector.

Life Beyond the Cocoon



Why use the analogy of a Cocoon?

One of nature's miracles is the journey of the Caterpillar to becoming a Butterfly.

As part of the life cycle the Caterpillar will spend a period of time in a chrysalis or cocoon away from the outside world.

This is a time of transformation and change. It is a safe space where the body of the caterpillar changes during its metamorphosis.

All the body parts, tissue and organs are used and transformed into its new state - a beautiful butterfly which can then emerge.

Sometimes we retreat from the world to heal and transform ourselves and then need help to emerge.



Living in a Cocoon

Can be either be self-imposed or imposed by ...

- A diagnosis of mental illness
- Stigma
- Culture
- Religion or Spiritual Beliefs/Practices
- Family
- Fear

People may retreat into a cocoon of safety and silence.

Living in a Cocoon

Creates -

- Isolation
- Exclusion

Creates barriers to -

- Correct Diagnosis
- Care and Support
- Communication/seeking help
- Inclusion – social, community, religious
- Opportunities

These barriers may make well-being unattainable for many.

Are there risks in staying in the Cocoon?

May compound the Isolation –

- Create further distance from help
- Possibility of retreating further into self via self-medication - Drug and Alcohol misuse
- Dual Diagnosis – Co-morbidity (Drug/Alcohol & Mental Illness)
- Criminal behaviours and Imprisonment - due to illness or drug addiction
- Continued untreated illness may lead to Homelessness or Tenancy Issues
- Higher risks to Personal Safety
- Loss of social networks
- Loss of social skills
- Development of Chronic Depression, Psychosis or Anxiety
- At higher risk of developing suicidality
- Remain untreated – Hidden Carers and Consumers
- Contributes to higher rates of late presentation for treatment & crisis interventions

The Lived Experience.....

The actual illness and diagnosis –

- The illness and symptoms
- Culture
- Knowledge of mental illness
- Loss of identity - the person with the illness (mental health consumer) and family/friends (carer/s)

Affect on Family and Friends -

- Negative or fearful reaction about mental illness

Hospitalisation -

- Can isolate people from community

The Challenges for Multicultural People

CONSUMER Perspective – Being on a Good Recovery Journey

- Getting professional support
- Access to effective treatments
- Support for family/friends
- Learning better coping mechanisms
- Having people understand/not judge person with mental illness
- Increasing connections with community
- Being understood/responsive

STIGMA / Mental Illness

- More education within ethnic communities
- Removing current myths/misunderstandings of mental health & mental illness



The Challenges for Multicultural People

CARER Perspective

A Recovery Journey – What's that?



What do Carers Need?

CARER Perspective – Facilitating Recovery for CaLD Carers & Families

- More service provision for Carers
- Recognition of family efforts
- Ethnic Support Groups
- Access and assistance to attend education workshops in their own language
- Access to information and choices around caring role
- Respite programs
- Acceptance of the value of family contributing to therapy dialogue
- Understanding family's culture & upbringing
- LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN
- KINDNESS
- Nurturing & Support

What do people from CaLD backgrounds need?

- Information
- Education
- Remove the uncertainty associated with illness
- Respect
 - Different perceptions of mental illness
 - Culture
- To be heard
- To be included
- Professional support
- Good treatment options
- Specialised Transcultural Mental Health Services
- Community support

Specialised Treatment/Care Options

Transcultural Mental Health Services

- Work in partnership with cultural communities, CaLD Carers and Consumers
- Use in-built resilience in cultural communities
- Understanding of religious and spiritual perspectives
- Understanding about specific culture and gender needs
- Give good guidance

Specialised Treatment/Care Options

Transcultural Mental Health Services

- Provide Interpreters and access to information in persons own language
- Employ staff who are from diverse cultural backgrounds
- Provide access to CaLD Consumer and Carer Peer Workers

Reducing barriers between clinicians, services and CaLD carers and consumers

By Creating -

- User friendly services
- Culturally / Supportive recovery environments
- Pictorial information posters / or information posters in languages other than English

By Providing –

- Access to Interpreters when needed
- Understanding people's culture / empowering choice
- CaLD specific Advocates / Peer Support

By Ensuring Best Practice Through -

- Training staff in culturally appropriate best practice
- Developing/Implementing/Adhering to culturally appropriate Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and policies and frameworks
- Inclusion of CaLD Consumers/Carers in quality improvement & feedback mechanisms
- Creating feedback mechanisms that allow for collection of the stories / experience of service use from ALL service users including those whose second language is English

Emerging from the cocoon

The benefits of opening up.....

- Greater support options
- More opportunities to learn more skills
- More involved with local community
- Less anxiety of who knows about illness
- Family can easily assist more
- Family can also assist extra support



Life beyond the cocoon... blossoming from a Chrysalis to a Butterfly



You will know you have emerged from the cocoon when you -

- Have found a new identity beyond the diagnosis
- Realised that mental illness is only part of one's life
- Recognised the strengths, abilities and resilience that individuals and families have and which can open up one's life and community to possibilities.

When you or your family are able to be involved in –

- Meaningful work
- Creating connections
- Building support networks
- Creating a happy medium
- Living life and thriving



Thank you for your Attention

Áine Tierney

Mobile – 0403 497 959

Email: aine.tierney@optusnet.com.au

Evan Bichara

Mobile - 0411 054 882

Email: evan.bichara@svhm.org.au