EXPLORING EXISTENTIAL IDEAS WITH AN OLDER ADULT EXPERIENCING SEVERE DEPRESSION.

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“I feel like a boat lost at sea, and this mindfulness, this recovery, is an island. I can see it now, I know it’s there. I have a choice. I can tie my rope to this island and step onto the land. If I don’t want to stay or if I’m not ready I can always get back on my boat, untie the rope and float back out to sea. At least I know the island is there now.” (Pollyanna, 2015)

‘He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how’ Nietzsche (1889)

- Service user collaboration
- The option of recovery
- Exploring existential ideas
- Humanistic approach
- Psycho-education
- Mindfulness based approaches
- The use of metaphor
- Multidisciplinary working and risk management
- Individualised assessment tools.
- Article writing as a therapeutic intervention

This article discusses a service users story of surviving a life threatening brain haemorrhage, which resulted in her having severe and chronic depression with suicidal ideation. She describes her experiences of an existential crisis and loss of self-identity which she was unable to resolve independently.

The article describes the collaborative work between a service user, mental health nurse and clinical psychologist to meaningfully work towards recovery. Using existential and humanistic orientations, it describes some key evidence based psychological approaches to intervention.

The service user contributed to the article, which became an intervention in itself.

“I would fantasize about death as an escape from it all. The thoughts would swing from wanting to be dead, well, killing myself, to realising that I couldn’t actually go through with it. I felt trapped.” Pollyanna (2015)