

# EXPLORING EXISTENTIAL IDEAS WITH AN OLDER ADULT EXPERIENCING SEVERE DEPRESSION.

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**(MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR OLDER PEOPLE)**

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*“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)*

- ◉ *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 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)*

- ◉ **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**

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