



MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

Updates and information from the Atlantic County Office

The Self-Love and Valentine's Day Edition



Consumer Spotlight

The Beloved Belinda Manning

By Beth Wade

She has the endearing charm and wisdom of a hip favorite aunt who stays active with yoga, somatic movement, meditation, the arts, writing, and reading. Belinda Manning is just as memorable on the outside. She's known for her comfortable "senior" gear, often overalls, which is another nod to her self-care and wellness.

During the past 5 years, Belinda has been a beloved regular at the depression and anxiety group where, if there were a "reserved seat," she'd easily have earned one. At times she finds it necessary to take a break, but, without fail, she consistently comes back.



"There's always a voice you never heard before in group and each new voice brings new solutions, new ideas. There are also the familiar, reassuring voices that remind you of where you have been and how far you have come. They remind you that living with this disease is possible, and that it is manageable," she said. "This is the beauty of groups."

(Continued on page 5)

Belinda Manning has been an active part of the peer community for 5 years.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

FEBRUARY'S SELF-LOVE ONLINE CAMPAIGN

PAGE 2

COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

PAGE 4

HELLO "HYGGE" Winter wellness

PAGE 7

ACIL COMMUNITY PARTNER

PAGE 11

Our February online project is adapted from the wildly popular NY Times "Modern Love," a podcast and weekly column about relationships, feelings, and revelations.

Bern Tandler and Carolyn Quinn have collaborated, put a spin on the concept, and came up with Modern Self-Love in order to share your stories and experiences with self-love, which is important to wellness. We can learn a lot by reading about how each person meets their own personal needs and treats themselves with kindness, both in thought and action.

Modern Self-Love

What's your story?

BY BERN TANDLER

As we welcome February and the month that celebrates all kinds of love — love of a partner, family and friends -- we add SELF-LOVE to the list in a special way because it's so closely linked to wellness.

Our "Modern SELF-Love" series, which features inspiring accounts of self-love written by friends of the agency, will appear online throughout the month. Whether you submit one or read the series, this is a great way to celebrate, learn, reflect, and grow.

By inviting all of you to take time to reflect and write about your own self-love, I hope you will see your hidden strengths, what you've overcome & accomplished, and deepen your commitment to self-love. Last year's response was amazing. (Note: People who submitted last year may submit again this year.)

Continued on page 3



(Continued from Modern Self-Love)

It seemed those who participated even surprised themselves at what they created! Another benefit I noticed was how the process proved to be healing as participants reflected on their own relationship with self-love.

That's why we chose to do the project again this year.

Sometimes we need to sit with a concept to see how it shows up for us. And through doing this, I hope folks will look within themselves to see what self-love means to them. When we start to give something our attention, then we can continue to notice it in life and help it grow.

Self-love is always something we are working towards or hoping for. Writing can be like a mirror. When we write about our self-love, we are staring back at our own healthy habits and qualities. Acknowledging and honoring acts of self-love can take us outside ourselves for a moment to treat ourselves as we would treat a close friend.



”By doing this, I hope folks will look within themselves to see what self-love means to them and how it shows up in their lives.”

Bern Trendler
Wellness Program Manager and
organizer of Modern Self-Love

A poster for the 'Modern SELF-Love' project. It features a white background with a colorful, abstract border. At the top, it says 'Our inspirational online project' in a small font. Below that, 'Modern SELF-Love' is written in large, bold, red letters. To the right of the text is a red speech bubble icon containing a white heart. Underneath, it says '...is BACK throughout February!' in red. A paragraph of text follows: 'We're collecting stories about how you found an appreciation of your worth, well-being, and happiness. Share your "spin" on self-love (Concept adapted from the wildly popular NY Times column)'. Below this is a pink box containing submission guidelines: 'Suggested length, about 250 words or less', 'Use your name OR remain anonymous', 'Submissions will be shared online', 'Include a photo or clip art that will appear with your story (or we'll choose one that compliments your submission)', and 'Optional: a photo of the author'. At the bottom, it says 'All participants receive a gift for their participation. Random drawing of prizes at an online event in March!' followed by a dotted line and the email address 'btrendler@mhanj.org'. At the very bottom, it says 'This is a program of the Mental Health Association in Atlantic County in collaboration with United by Wellness Center'.

On Tuesday, March 1, I'll be co-hosting an event for participants to read their entries live during our evening of self-love. I invite you to join as an audience member or participate by reading your submission. There's also a random drawing for gift cards among participants.

Last year I saw how empowering it was for each person to read own their own story and stand authentically in their experiences. But more than anything, I think it showed us all that we are not alone. In fact, we are all working on self-love and on our individual journeys with it. ■

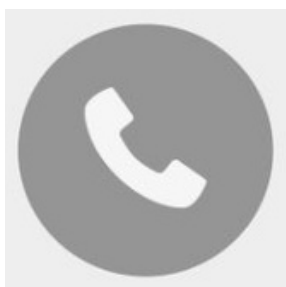
**Acute Care Family
Program serves
families in crisis
7 days per week
Available 8 am to 8 pm
609 517-8614**

Support and assistance for families with a loved one in crisis and in need of linkage to treatment and other services.

Our team engages families who are often navigating the mental health system for the first time.

Staff educate families about mental illness and offer resources and referrals that can help their loved one

*Help is a phone
call away*



Community Bulletin Board

Stockton's Art
Gallery has two free
exhibits
now thru April 5
(Closed March 12-20)

QiGong
classes are offered online
for free through the
Atlantic City Library &
Oceanside Family
Success Center

Painting Workshop
for adults with grief and loss
No cost, includes food and
beverages

Sunday, Feb. 13 at 1 pm in AC
Email to reserve your seat
Email Vanessafore1982@gmail.com

NEW Support Group Meeting
for Caregivers of Adults
See Flier on page 10
for details

(Continued from Belinda page 1)

Her nearly lifelong struggle with mental health means she has many years of hindsight and experience to draw upon. Over the years she has become more aware of the issues surrounding her chronic depression. She says it has generational roots, and is also accompanied by the interjection of personal experiences of trauma.

Despite three “breaks” as she calls them, Belinda has enjoyed a successful professional career – including working publishing, youth counseling, data research and analysis, as well as managing her own consulting firm. She’s also been an active volunteer for local and statewide organizations, most recently as a Trustee for the Ocean Wind Trust.

A great supporter during those years has been her husband, David. Having support, being prepared and practicing what she learns makes a difference in her day-to-day life, she said. Maintaining her wellness requires work and intention – and a continuous focus on her healing and wellness.



Pictured are Belinda and her husband, David

“Knowing yourself is an important key in managing this disease that can create an intense and long-term emotional response,” said Belinda. “Knowing and avoiding emotional triggers is priority tied with incorporating all of the wisdom you learned to manage your response.”

In combination with the MHA Atlantic groups, Belinda has attended groups through AtlantiCare Behavioral Health where she learned she about trauma, triggers, and medication. She began attending as part of her maintenance and discharge plan from Acute Care.

Past and present group facilitators of her depression and anxiety group have proven to be “gifts” to Belinda. Bernadette Trendler, the current facilitator, is a prize-worthy listener, she says, describing Bern as someone with a very special talent for holding everyone together, hearing, and reflecting.

“All of this has been important in creating a more full picture of what this ‘thing’ is made of and how to dismantle and rebuild something better in its place,” she explained.

In recent years, following retirement, she added a new element to her wellness. Belinda began to explore the arts, which proved to be an unrealized passion. As a self-taught artist, she has won first place and best-in-show awards in photography and mixed media arts Atlantic County and State of New Jersey Senior Art Exhibits.



This photograph earned Belinda first prize in an Atlantic County competition.



This mixed media work by Belinda is the story of her father. It is a county and state prize winner.

Belinda also is a gifted writer who describes the activity as a “spiritual exercise” that serves as a vehicle for self-reflection. Her poem, “In My Mother’s Garden” which is about the experience of caring for her mother who lived with dementia, earned her the New Jersey Wordsmith Award.

Thank you, Belinda, for your ongoing contributions to the community at-large and the peer community. You are an inspiration both in and out of group. ■



MENTAL HEALTH
ASSOCIATION

FEBRUARY
SUPPORT GROUPS

SUICIDE PREVENTION
PLEASE NOTE TOPIC COVERS
ISSUES OF A SENSATIVE NATURE
FEBRUARY 10TH AT 10:00 AM

MENTAL ILLNESS-
ITS IMPACT ON THE
PERSON AND THEIR FAMILY.
FEBRUARY 24TH AT 10:00 AM

CODEPENDENCY
FEBRUARY 17TH AT 7:00 PM

The Intensive Family Support Service program hosts a support group to assist family members of persons with mental illness. This meeting includes a psychoeducation component and a support group segment.

<https://zoom.us/j/952751315...>

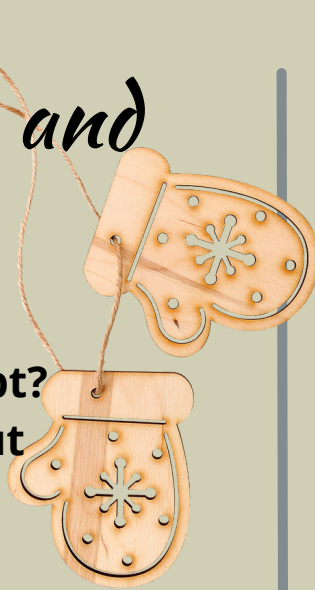
Meeting ID: 952 751 315

Password: 615745



If you're hygge and you know it...

Haven't heard the hype on this wellness concept? Here's what it's all about



BY BETH WADE

Despite living in a somewhat weather-challenged location with periods of wind and rain, the people of one European country are considered the happiest in the world. They are the Danish.

What's their secret to joy and contentment? The word is hard to say and spell, but it's called "hygge."

Hygge? Yes, the word, which is pronounced "HOO-GAH," is the long-standing lifestyle that encourages appreciation for the moment, gratitude, and quality of life. They have hygge décor to go with the hygge state of mind.

OK, Hygge. So if you are good enough for the Danish, with their award-winning happiness, let's invite some of this to New Jersey this winter, which has been pretty cold and sometimes sunless for days.

Note that hygge is a year-round thing in Denmark, not just for the winter. In the spring, it's hygge to have a picnic, for example.

In your living space, the idea is to surround yourself with belongings that you pick up often and bring you joy. Decorating in Denmark tends to be minimalistic. (January is a good time of year to declutter.) One of the key components is lighting. They love candles!

The general idea is to be mindful, practice gratitude, relax, and focus on a good quality of life. Indulgence in moderation is also part of being hygge.

Put down the phone and turn off the TV (I hear some of you booing and hissing!). Trade them for music, board games, good food, a warm drink for moments of hygge. Sending a handwritten note or letter and making a phone call also qualify.

People in Denmark say this concept has been working for centuries. It's not a trend, but more a lifestyle. Read more about hygge online or reserve a book at the library. Below are some options offered through United By Wellness that are not labeled "hygge," but, the themes tie into the concept.

"Monday Music" Mondays 7 pm – 9 pm; "Gratitude Coffee Talk" Wednesdays at 9 am; "Creative Collective" first Friday of each month at 6 pm; "Music to my Ears" Fridays 7 pm to 10 pm; and "Just Hanging" Saturdays at 12 pm. ■

Hello **HYGGE**

Keep things simple

Be present

Decorate the inside with the outside

Choose books, music, and movies that are good for your spirit

Unclutter your space

Soften lighting, use candles

Create coziness

Soft socks, fabrics & blankets



Eating Disorders Awareness Week is February 21-27



"I just really want to be there for anyone who needs help like I did and wants to feel less alone while dealing with something that makes you think you'll never be good enough. People who need someone to say, 'I've been there...I understand, and there's hope for the future.'"

**~Kris Auble
Facilitator of the
Balance & Body Image Group**

Balance & Body Image

Every 1st & 3rd Tuesday at 7pm

A peer-led support group for adults living with or recovering from disordered eating

Join us as we find support from others who have experienced disordered eating, learn about healthy coping skills to aid recovery, and work together to improve self-worth and self-esteem.

Call/email for Zoom meeting information or join the virtual wellness center at no cost using this link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/8VXP2K8>



609-652-3800



Unitedbywellness@mhanj.org



mhaac.info/ubw



THIS IS A GROUP OF UNITED BY WELLNESS, MCHANJ'S VIRTUAL WELLNESS CENTER

Mental health screening is a helpful tool and a quick way to "check in" with yourself, especially during this new phase of the pandemic

Depression screening, anxiety, PTSD, youth screening

A dozen types available online

www.mhaac.info/screening

Quick, anonymous, no cost

**ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE
WHEN YOU HAVE THE RIGHT PEOPLE
TO SUPPORT YOU**



Find out how we can help

The POST Program provides one-on-one support to those living with a mental health condition

Call Britt at 609 652-3800 ext. 308



Caring for the Caregiver - Support Group for Caregivers of Adults

Meeting via Zoom the
4th Tuesday of each
month



First session:

Feb. 22nd | 3-4PM

PRESCREENING REQUIRED
CONTACT JEN HAND AT 856-266-2817
OR JHAND@BRATTONLAWGROUP.COM

*Organized by members of Cape Atlantic
Caregiver's Coalition*



Taking a closer look at ACIL

Atlantic Center for Independent Living



- Advocacy
- Life Skills Training
- Transition Services
- Peer Support
- Information and Referrals

ATLANTIC
CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING...

Chronic Illness Support Group

Wednesdays @ 2pm

Ehlers Danlos Syndrome, Fibromyalgia, Chronic Pain, Arthritis, Multiple Sclerosis, Migraines, Complex Regional Pain Syndrome and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Zoom Meeting ID #: 854 4918 0096
[Zoom Link](#)

Atlantic Center for Independent Living, Inc. supports equal access for all. For accommodations email jburkeatatlanticil.org or call (609)748-2253 ext 4.

Sketch Book Club

Let's explore our creativity through art! Drawing is a fun and relaxing way to unwind. Join us for a new topic each week. Create a realistic or expressive drawing using any supplies you have handy.

Mondays | 1:00 PM
Zoom Meeting ID #: 838 5439 1536
Passcode: 196590
[Zoom Link](#)

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ATLANTIC
CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING...

LIFE SKILLS ACTIVITIES

- ✓ LEARN NEW SKILLS
- ✓ HAVE FUN & MEET FRIENDS
- ✓ NEW TOPICS EACH WEEK
- ✓ TUESDAYS AT 1PM [ZOOM LINK](#)

ZOOM MEETING ID #: 811 7298 2370
PASSCODE: 543838

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Call 609.748.2253