



Written by a member of Synergy:

Synergy Creative Community gave me community and a sense of belonging at a time when I deeply felt stigmatised, isolated, vulnerable and very alone. I was warmly welcomed, by people with friendly, open, approachable faces, and was made to feel safe and relaxed, and felt immediately accepted. I had not met any of these people before, and yet I instantly felt included, involved. I do not know how to describe what a relief that was for me, the heaviness in my heart lifting a little, and a tiny, tiny ray of hope in my own frightened darkness beginning to glimmer. Synergy Creative Community helped me to rediscover my shattered self belief, & to rediscover the faith I had lost in myself, at a time when I needed it the most.

Most people struggle when they leave hospital, its all so hard, so overwhelming, so frightening, you feel weak and scared and isolated, then on top of all that, all the meds completely knocking you sideways as well. Because of Synergy Creative Community, I did not have to face these challenges alone. Someone brought me along to Synergy Creative Community and immediately, I felt safe there, and comfortable, no pressure to hide the fact that I have bi-polar when amongst others with bi-polar, schizophrenia and depression.

We come together weekly as a group through creativity. This is what initially brings us together, the shared creative experience. We find it both bonding and healing. What also bonds us is the freedom to express our lived experiences of bi-polar, schizophrenia and depression with like minded people, people who truly do understand and accept you for who you really are, just as you accept others in the group for who they really are, all of us living with the same mental health issues.

We laugh and joke *alot* about the predicaments we often find ourselves in, as a result of living with bi-polar, schizophrenia, depression. Sometimes, the best healing can be laughing and laughing around the table over some truly terrible experience, trying desperately not to laugh, but then, the teller of the tale continues to describe their terrible experience in such a way as to have the whole table snorting, gasping, laughing and guffawing til we are screeching with it, and the tears are running down our cheeks.

We also cry about our pain, most of us often having to keep silent to the outside world of what we are dealing with in our lives, either because we are scared of losing a job if it were known, or because a family member doesn't want to know / doesn't want to accept its existence / doesn't understand / doesn't want to understand..... at Synergy, you tend to find people giving you a hug, a listening ear, or quietly placing a nice cup of hot tea into your hands. We are not professionals, we can't provide counselling or anything like that... we run this group for ourselves, by ourselves. We really are the loonies leading the loonies who are leading the loonies who thought that they were the ones leading the loonies...and its all rather loony to try to work out who is leading who when we're all going round in a circle together... but the main thing is, A) It Works! & B) You Are Not Alone at Synergy Creative Community! - well, not unless you want to be!

The group has gone through many changes and different phases over the years, with many people coming and going, some even coming back again! But the one constant that I've noticed never changes is the warm welcome I

receive every Tuesday from like-minded, inspiring people who care about me. That is what this community is about, I think - a big warm Synergy hug, a welcoming smile, acceptance, mutual respect, eating a meal together round the table, shared creative exploration, a few tears, and a lot of laughter and joy. Oh, and some meditating. ~ especially the ones involving eating chocolate, they're the best meditations EVER!

Gallery: Synergy member's art work from our weekly drop-in:



We play music together at the drop-in every week



We cook a lovely tasty and nutritious meal together every week





Yummy yummy, grubs all gone and went down a treat!



We come together, we create, we bond and we share

