

Call for Papers – Our Encounters with Self Harm

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This book will form part of a series with PCCS books. The first of these books, 'Our Encounters with Madness', has received excellent reviews. Fran Biley is now working 'Our Encounters with Suicide'. Both of these are collections of individual's own testimonies and narratives - about the care they have received, about what works and what doesn't, about their life events and histories, and about how individual's conceptualise issues which are commonly only referred to as 'pathological' or as a sign of 'mental illness'. We have been contracted to develop a third book in this series, 'Our Encounters with Self Harm'.

Such a book is desperately needed for clinicians and students working with individuals who self harm, across the spectrum of healthcare services, and will be invaluable not only to individuals who may have direct personal experience of self-harm but also to their families, carers and friends. Because of prevailing negative attitudes across a spectrum of services, students and practitioners are alienated from self harm, treating it as though it is a personal affront at times and at best with coldness.

A collection like this will, we hope, bridge the gap between professional and personal knowledge and understanding. Self harm is often portrayed in clinical books and the media as difficult to manage, involving high risk situations, as being carried out by individuals who are manipulative or attention seeking, and as being particularly draining on staff emotional and practical resources in healthcare settings. We do NOT believe this to be the case, and such attitudes distract from the reality of human distress, suffering and, crucially, survival which individuals who have or do harm themselves report.

In contrast to such negative mainstream approaches, this book will consist of a wide selection of autobiographical stories, narratives, poetry and vignettes of varying length and styles (rather than realist scientific or quasi-scientific accounts) illustrating the rich, contextual lived experience of negotiating, struggling and surviving self harm.

We invite contributions from anyone who has experienced self harm, whether personally, professionally or as a family member or friend. Contributions can be published under an assumed or pseudonym and contact to Charley Baker will only be shared with the other two editors, Francis Biley and Clare Shaw. In keeping with media guidelines on publishing related to suicide, we amend these to consider the need to avoid sensationalizing or glamorizing self harm; potentially avoiding specific details about method (whenever relevant or triggering); we understand the importance of role models; will take this opportunity to educate the public about myths and realities of self harm; and provide information about help/support available for those who may request it; we will consider the aftermath of self harm and the potential vulnerability of contributors (after Pirkis et al (2006) Media guidelines on reporting suicide. *Crisis*, 27, 82-87).

You may wish to contribute under one or some of the headings below:

- Strength and Survival
- Coping
- Recovery
- Harm Reduction Approaches
- Care and Treatment
- Significant others and their role
- Educating others about self harm
- The Tricky Issue of Personality and its 'Disorders'
- Best Practice – the future of care

Submissions may take any creative form, such as poetry, biography, stories or short works of fiction. They should be presented double-spaced, using arial font size 12, with wide margins and would be typically 500-3000 words, although there is no hard and fast rule about word count. The submission should start with a title and your name (or pseudonym if you would prefer) and email contact (that will not be included in the final text). The main body of the text should be followed a short section on the lessons to be learnt from your experience (what was good, or could have been better etc) and by a short biography of 1-200 words. If you would like to discuss a potential contribution prior to submission, please contact Charley Baker (email as above).

The deadline for submissions is 30th September 2012.

Thank you and kind regards

Charley, Fran and Clare

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