

# Positive Lives

## The Colours of HIV

Being diagnosed Positive with HIV was very hard to take on board, never mind trying to explain how I felt about it. After some time trying to cope by myself, I was referred to Staffordshire buddies. Even there at Buddies I found it hard to talk about HIV to others that where in the same situation as me.

While I was there someone recommended that some complementary therapy would/may help me come to terms with being positive. Since then I have been having reiki sessions twice a month. In each session the therapist Lyn Harvey uses colours to explain things.

The next natural thing for me was to think about HIV in colour form and of how I was feeling. I found this very helpful as this gave me the courage to talk about HIV to others and how I was feeling about it.

I can now talk openly about HIV at the drop in I attend to the people there who know about my status.

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These are the meaning of the colours starting from the centre

- 1 (white) being at one with my life
- 2 (Dirty yellow) the fear of what was wrong with me
- 3 (red) the anger when I had my diagnosis
- 4 (yellow) the fear of living with H I V
- 5 (blue) the start of my healing
- 6 (purple) the deep healing with my medication
- 7 (light blue) the start of my spirit being healed
- 8 (orange) my inner peace.



## Positive Lives

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### Cover Photograph:



This picture was drawn by the service  
user who also wrote the article on the  
front page.

 Buddies is like a second home to me ,  
when I am there for those few hours I  
am in a different world, I can talk , feel  
and get hugs without anyone thinking I  
will pass HIV on to them 



**Staffordshire Buddies Service User**

 It has been good for me because it has  
been there for me emotionally,  
financially and socially. It's a good service  
because the staff go that extra mile to  
help you, unlike other places 

**Staffordshire Buddies Service User**

 When I come here (drop-in) I don't want  
to go home, I feel safe and can talk  
about anything without people judging  
me 

**Staffordshire Buddies Service User**

 I know for a fact that when I come to  
Buddies and I am stressed about  
anything to do with my status, I speak to  
people at drop in and I get ideas on how to  
deal with it. When you are positive you need  
someone who is in the same situation to talk to  
you about it, I know I can count on  
Buddies 

**Staffordshire Buddies Service User**

## Lichfield Drop-Out to Drayton Manor Theme Park

On Thursday 12th June a small group of people attended a day of fun and frolics at Drayton Manor. It was fantastic to see some new faces that were made welcome by some positive interaction from our regular faces. Some people even recognised the importance of taking a day off work so as not to miss out on such a fantastic opportunity.

Following several vanity photographic poses the bravest of the group ventured into an un-touched abyss to sample the first of a large body drier to rid clothing of excess water. At one point things looked as if they may have gotten out of hand when some confused folk had to be told that getting naked in the drier was not appropriate for the current environment! With all the morning's activities and excitement filed on our minds as a recent and pleasurable memory it became apparent that everyone had succumb to the effects of a body fuel tank running on empty. These feelings had all heading off to stuff faces with lunch which consisted of a spread of various contributions made and supplied by our Drop-In Buddies members of the day. A particular favourite was the homemade spinach pie which was scrumptious!

With lunch partly on route through the digestive tract it was time for the thrill seeking adrenaline junkies to negotiate some of the extreme rides



while the anoraks of our gathering enjoyed riding some of the more leisurely attractions. Further amusement was witnessed when some of the extreme riders were seen fighting to refrain from allowing the contents of their stomachs to head in a less than desirable direction!



Everyone had a most enjoyable day sharing jokes, humorous comments and laughing with each other. It was an immense pleasure to see such great interaction, rapport and support emulating from everyone's great big compassionate and empathetic hearts, minds and souls.

Lichfield Drop-In provides a safe, friendly comfortable space for positive people living across South Staffordshire. Complementary Therapies available by appointment for more information contact Fiona Russell on 01543 418770 / 07790366137

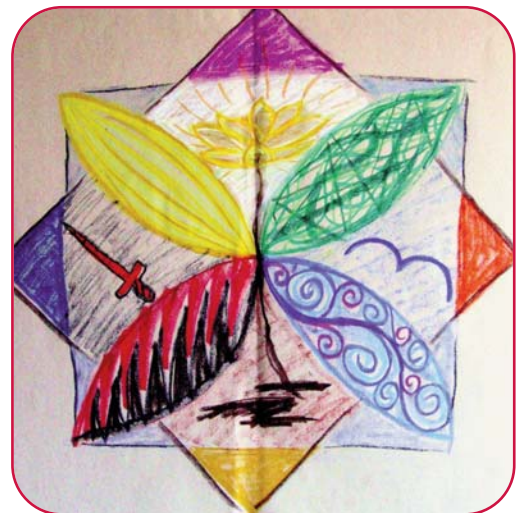
**Fiona Russell**  
HIV Services Assistant South Staffordshire

# Art Therapy

Art therapy uses a method of making art to try and improve the physical, mental and emotional well-being of people, whatever their age. It's thought that the creativity involved in art expression helps resolve issues and problems, develop social contact skills, manage behaviour problems, reduce stress, and increase self-esteem and self-awareness. Art therapy combines visual art (drawing, painting, sculpture, and other art forms), with models of counselling and psychotherapy. Art therapy is used with children, adolescents, adults, older adults, groups, and families to assess any of the following: anxiety, depression, and emotional problems and disorders ; substance abuse and other addictions; family and relationship issues; abuse and domestic violence; social and emotional issues related to disability and illness; trauma and loss; physical, and neurological problems; and difficulties related to medical illness. Art therapy sessions are run in various settings including hospitals, clinics, public and community organisations, educational departments, businesses, and private practices. Art therapists are trained in the application of a variety of art disciplines (drawing, painting, sculpture, and other media) for assessment and treatment.

We will be holding an art therapy drop-in at the Hanley centre in the next two months keep a look out on the board or in the newsletter.

For more information, please ring Priscilla on 01782 201280





## Children's activities and Art Therapy

As this issue is based on Art Therapy I thought you would like to know how we encourage Art Therapy with the young people who access Staffordshire Buddies. In the past the group have visited a pottery venue and made various items such as leaf bowls, vases and masks, we then painted these at a later activity

We visited a castle where after a brief tour and talk about ghosts and ghouls the children were taught about the grand balls that used to take place at the castle. People wore very wonderful costumes and always took along a mask.

The children then designed some ball masks. Masks fit for a king's ball!

We also very recently visited a pottery craft venue where the children took part in a painting evening. Various items were decorated.

These activities are very therapeutic with the children being able to express themselves in their own styles. All are encouraged to be as free style as they want to be.

There are no right and wrong way's to express art and the children are informed of this so there is no cries of "mine's rubbish, he is better than me"!

For more information on children's activities please contact Joanne Kemsley (Positive Families Worker) on 01782 201251



## Counselling

There are over 400 different types of counselling practiced in Britain. Neil Pepper and I are person centred counsellors, which means that we do not see ourselves as the experts in the session; the client is the one who has all the information that will help them change and feel better. We try to build a trusting and reliable relationship with the client, which through time will produce healing.

Many people need support and counselling when they are newly diagnosed with HIV, or when they start medication. At this time accurate information may be needed to help the person understand their medical condition.

There may be emotional issues that need to be explored. Fear, anger, sadness and shame, may be stopping the person living a normal life.

Many of us have learnt to keep our feelings hidden. We may find it easier to share our thoughts with others, but not our feelings. We are all very different and techniques that help one person do not help another. Drama, dance and art can be used to help people discover and explore their emotions.

Art therapy uses crayons, paints and clay to express painful feelings and thoughts which can be really helpful. Many art therapists work with a group of people and sharing will be part of the therapy. People say, I am not an artist, I could not do that sort of exploration, but you do not need any artistic ability, much of the art work is abstract or exploring colour. Art therapy is a safe way to express strong and powerful feelings, especially if you have problems putting things into words. I have found working with children and adolescents, that these techniques can be really helpful.

Colours are all around us and exploring and using them can be useful. Some one may represent their childhood using black paint or perhaps red. What do these colours mean to them? Anger, sadness and passion for example. Are certain people represented by a certain colour or shape, what is the significance of that?

Many of these techniques can be used by general counsellors, from the Humanistic or Psychodynamic field, and they will be used with certain clients.

John McLeod says that counselling is an activity

that is at the same time both simple and complicated, I agree with this. In counselling people will talk about every thing and the quality I feel I need to be able to give to the client is my understanding. To feel understood is hugely important. Our lives may have been vastly different, we may have lived in different continents but for me to be empathic and accepting, and to respect the client will lead to therapeutic change.



We all live in a stressful world; we have this reinforced by the television daily. One area, counselling can look at is how we cope with stress. How do we look after ourselves? Do we feel it is acceptable to care for ourselves? Another area that may be helpful is spirituality? Do we have a sense of life being bigger than us? Do we have faith in God? We all know people die from HIV, are we able to explore our thoughts and feelings related to death? Can we take away some of the fear surrounding death? Life goals, do we have any? Do we want to be doing different things with our life? Again other areas that some people look at.

I hope you have a clear picture of what counselling offers. We help people look at distressing events from the past as well as how they can manage the present time differently. The models and styles can be very different as can the techniques used. All counsellors should work to a code of ethics and be a member of an organisation like The British Association for Counsellors and Psychotherapists. The government is trying to regulate the field and many counsellors are now accredited or working towards this.

If you would like to speak to Buddies' staff they can tell you more about Neil and myself or if you would like to speak directly to us please do.

**Jenny Read 07711 483436**  
**Neil Pepper 07979 953729**

## The summer has arrived, are you planning a holiday?

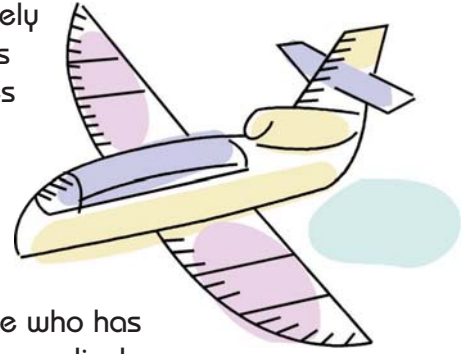
If you're HIV+, don't take the risk of travelling without travel insurance that will cover you for anything HIV related – or you could be opening yourself up to large medical bills!

If you have 'ordinary' travel insurance, should your HIV status be discovered, it is possible the entire policy could be made void or possibly you would not be covered for anything that the insurers consider even remotely HIV related.

### Are you travelling with someone who is not HIV+?

Should the worst happen and you have to cancel or cut short your trip because of your HIV, then anyone travelling with you who also may wish to cancel or cut short their trip should

also be insured with the same insurer as you. If your companion(s) have 'ordinary' travel insurance their claim is unlikely to be met, as these policies are not designed to insure them if they are travelling with someone who has a pre-existing medical condition. Always check first.



There are specialist insurers who deal specifically with people living with medical conditions, please ring either the Hanley or Lichfield Centre for details.

## Sanity Fair

Unlike the wet weather last year, Sanity Fair in Hanley on Saturday 14th 2008 was blessed with fine weather, for much of the afternoon it was gloriously sunny.

Staffordshire Buddies was allotted a tiny stall, sandwiched between two others. This meant that those manning it had to stand away from the stall to allow the public to get close to pick up cards, red ribbons, leaflets and other goodies and to read the poster display.

The golden lavatory seat attracted a great deal of attention, with macho guys wanting to sit on it to have their photos taken. Alan Cuell thought we could have charge 50p for 'a photo on the throne'!

The red balloons were popular with young children whilst their older brothers and sisters snapped up wristbands and pencils. Not everyone wanted the red ribbons offered, but many did. Perhaps the most gratifying occurrence was when people asked for a full set of the postcards entitled: 'You can't catch HIV

from Kissing, Sharing Cups etc. These included mothers who wanted to take them home for their children and people who wanted to put them up at work. Well done to all who helped prepare the material for the stall and the volunteers who staffed it.

MG



When I made a list of topics for this edition of Positive Lives, it spilled over two A4 sheets of paper, so out goes the trivial! To be truthful, HIV is rarely at the forefront of my mind... I have been so busy with my Open University language courses, with practising and performing piano and organ, including a concert at Stoke Minster (pictured), as well as writing, updating my website and attending all kinds of meetings. Nonetheless, some things haven't escaped my attention. Did you know about the extended services now offered at the North Staffs GUM clinic? They now offer a walk-in service in addition to the normal appointments system. They have also established a day clinic at Bentilee Health Centre, which operates on Tuesdays.

### **Bouncing viral load**

An HIV matter that has concerned me, was the inexplicable fluctuations in my viral load: a blip of 510 in December turned on retesting into a viral rebound of 4,000, which then resumed its more usual 'undetectable' level in February. It seems I was not alone; a number of patients, with similar stable undetectable viral loads, experienced viral rebounds, at the same time. Samples sent to Birmingham were found have no detectable trace of HIV, but the accuracy of the results was adhered to by the local laboratory. As my consultant could offer no explanation, I suggested that it might be a simple matter of presentation of data. Any health care professional or informed patient knows that when a CD4 count appears in the lab report as ".452" it doesn't mean the patient has less than half of a single CD4 cell, but rather 452 cells. You automatically move the decimal point three places to the right; or put another way you multiply (10x10x10). The Ultra Sensitive Viral Load Test in current use, displays an 'undetectable' result as <40; so by using the same multiplication principal (10x10) you get 4,000. If anyone has a more likely explanation, I would love to hear it.

### **Internet**

As webmaster of [www.LGBmind-matters.com](http://www.LGBmind-matters.com) I keep my eyes open for new initiatives that might be useful to keep it updated. One site I rely on for relevant, current information is <http://www.thebody.com/>. Despite its USA location, it covers HIV globally. For those with Internet access, I recommend its weekly email-newsletter as a handy way of keeping in touch with the latest HIV medication, treatment and social issues. One of The Body's most recent developments, is a sponsored forum on Ageing with HIV, something that many thought would never happen. Well, it has! I'm proof of that. I was delighted to find that the doctor answering questions in the forum was Dr Graeme Moyle from the Chelsea and

Westminster Hospital in London, someone I know and respect.



**maurice's**

**angle**

Recent questions put to him include concerns about Testosterone levels, low libido (sexual drive) and sexual dysfunction. Another site that is well worth a visit is <http://www.posornot.com/> This site challenges conceptions about HIV asking you to decide if a person is HIV+ or not by judging from a photograph with a few personal details. It's a brilliant idea

that aims to challenge stigma and discrimination sponsored by the popular music channel MTV.

### **Older LGBT Workshop**

At the beginning of April, I took part in a Nottingham University and Sue Ryder Trust workshop in London on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual (LGBT) end of life issues. It was good to be able to add an HIV dimension to the discussions that took place which, hopefully will lead to the publication of material that will encourage a better understanding with a consequent improvement in equality of treatment for elderly LGBT people by healthcare, social-service workers and in other public organisations.

### **LGBT Mental Health Conference**

In June I attended the National LGBT Mental Health Conference in Nottingham. By going down to Derby the night before I was able to avoid the horrendous rush hour traffic and enjoy the company of my long time friends. My friends had a prior engagement that evening, an annual concert for elderly folk at a nearby village. Needless to say, I was roped in to help with piano accompaniment and singing. Despite the lack of rehearsal, the event was deemed a success, and certainly appeared to have entertained an appreciative audience. I arrived at the conference the following day having travelled the short distance between Derby and Nottingham by train. There was plenty of space on the outward trip, but on the return journey it was standing room only. Fortunately, I was with some seasoned conference delegates who ensured that we were first on the train and that we got seats together. Whilst my travelling companions were critical of many aspects of the conference, I found it illuminating and useful. The organisation could have been better: five simultaneous workshops in the same room is hardly thoughtful planning. But on the other hand, I heard some excellent, committed speakers, met some very interesting people and enjoyed stimulating conversation.

Today HIV reclaimed centre stage. A package from the Department of Work and Pensions dropped through my letterbox. Inside, the dreaded DLA review papers. I guess I must expect troubled times ahead. Stay well.

**Maurice**