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Research Symposium 2016



A Place for Healing in Mental Health Care and Recovery

Dr Jackie Liggins
Liaison Psychiatrist, CMMH

jackie.liggins@middlemore.co.nz
jackie.liggins@auckland.co.nz

1) The potential in exploring the service user experience , to better understand and inform service development and delivery: valuing the wisdom of experience.

2) The explicit exploration of place as it facilitates healing, indirectly questioning the current organisational structures of acute mental health units and other options for mental health care.

3) A reflection on the concept of recovery, arguing for a consideration of the universal phenomenon of healing as integral to recovery.

4) An observation of the intersection of my particular positionality, and what my service user experience means and contributes to my identity and work as a psychiatrist.

What I will talk about

- The research process
- Notions of place and space
- The journey of healing: what it was like to be unwell and then how that changed.
- Place based aspects of place as viewed through the lens of a journey we called healing.



Ashburn Hall

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THE RHODO'S ARE FLOWERING AGAIN

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I am writing this article in an unashamed attempt to promote Ashburn Hall, to remind those in need that it is an option that must be seriously considered for psychiatric care. It provides an indispensable service. The Hall is a privately run psychiatric hospital, but owned by the University of Otago, and affiliated with the Medical School. It is situated ten minutes from the centre of Dunedin (the bus stops just down the road). The original building was a farmhouse — some of the old stone walls still stand. Having been extended through the years, now it is like an old manor house. You wander up wide staircases to your individual bedroom. The latest additions on the property include a gymnasium. The grounds are wonderful (even in winter). They are part of the specialness of the place. Quiet, colourful, rhododendrons, azaleas, mature trees, the stream, the orchard, wood pigeons, bellbirds, tuis. Quite magical, and for me a haven, then a place of healing.

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I had of my world. But at Ashburn Hall, there was support for me in being with people who knew or had known what it was like. There were about 60 patients in the Hall, the population changing all the time as people left, others arrived. But 60 of us — all from different parts of the country, different walks of life, different life histories, different psychiatric histories. Some had, what are for me traditionally recognized psychiatric illnesses — manic depression, schizophrenia, others had eating disorders, alcoholism, still others had problems that didn't seem to have clear labels — depression, anxiety, secondary to life events. But mostly the labels didn't matter because what we all had in common was that we were all struggling to live positively in our own communities. My relationships with my family and friends were breaking down. Hell, I didn't have a relationship with myself, how could I expect to relate to anyone else?



FIGURE 1 • MENTAL HEALTH NEWS • SPRING 1992



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Ashburn Hall 1882- current



Kingseat Hospital 1932-1999



Tiaho Mai MHUnit 1996-current



St Paul de Mausole, Provence 2009



Vincent Van Gogh



Van Gogh's bedroom at St Paul



View from the bedroom window St Paul 2009



St Paul de Mausole

What makes a place a place of healing for the treatment of mental illness?

- an autoethnographic investigation of my experiences as service-user and psychiatrist focussing on place and healing experiences.
- Combined with the experiences of other service users who had been somewhere when unwell that they considered healing for them.

The Research

- ‘What makes a place a place of healing for the treatment of mental illness’? ... neither place nor healing were defined in research criteria
- Ethics approval 2012
- Ten participants recruited through service-user networks and snow-balling: two interviews each of 60-90 minutes
- Nine participants had more than one admission to a psychiatric unit

Places we identified as healing

- 2- forensic units
 - 1- Kaupapa maori unit in old-style institution
 - 1-therapeutic community
 - 2- acute mental health unit
 - 2- friend's home
 - 1- community art studio
 - 2 (+1)- respite
- Length of stay, or association, varied from weeks to years

Place and space

- Tuan (1997):
 - place is space that has become known
 - space is that which allows movement, whilst place requires a pause
- Gesler (1992):
 - Therapeutic landscapes: natural, built, social symbolic
- Seamon (2015):
 - Place is a subjective phenomenon

**A Journey of
Exploration
and Healing**

**What it was like to
be unwell**

Transformation of suffering

It takes time

Turning points
or right timing

It's hard work

**Creating space and
opportunities for exploration**

Sharing the
journey with
others

The place itself....
where, what,
natural and built

**A safe haven
and
A place to explore**

What happens
there- a place
of
opportunities

The journey of healing

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It's hard work

I'm a changed man ...
I bloomed

I grew into my skin, filling the nooks
and crannies of emptiness

Being on the
journey

Taking off a tight hat

metaphors of healing

Learning to do the rides

A nice warm bandage

The blocks that were laid out,
scattered everywhere
came together

Those moments of
contentment

Healing is the intensely personal process at the heart of recovery: **a journey of exploration and transformation that takes time and is hard work.** Through experience and connection we make sense of our illnesses, developing understanding and wisdom, and gaining hope and trust along the way. Given time for integration, we restore our integrity: becoming whole, and in this process of transformation our suffering is relieved.

place and healing

A place that is healing is one that offers safe haven; metaphorically holding us enough in a collaborative environment of care, hope and trust; while providing or creating space and opportunities for the hard work of exploration that underpins our healing.

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What happens
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of
opportunities

a haven, a time-out-of-
sorts

a hospital but not
as I knew it

it's not home ... but it is

a place to learn and
explore ... and it might not
be an easy place to be

a safe place

**The place
itself ... where
and what**

a place where I felt held
... enough

**Finding and creating
space**

a 'prison' or my 'monastery'?

cared for and
cared about

having my own
space

bedrooms

social spaces

windows

**The place itself ...
natural and built**

being in and connecting
with nature

quiet, warm, airy
and light

space to roam ... walking

The other places

they wanted to know me

cared for and
cared about

they were real people

**Sharing the
journey with
others**

care ... compassion ...
empathy

Trust goes both ways

we learnt from each
other

Being with people who knew
what it was like

routines, rules ...
and rituals

the formal work
of therapy

becoming self-reflective

doing and being

**What happens
there ... a place
of opportunities**

medication

I learnt from having fun too

The wisdom of
experience

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Wisdom arises in “some combination of education, practice, apprenticeship, personal experience, and deliberate reflection about life matters”. (Baltes & Smith, 2008)

It's hard work and
takes time

with time to just be

It's a slow process

Time with purpose ...
not sitting waiting to die

time and right-timing

A journey of healing connotes movement and thus takes time; this may be moments in time, or lengths of time; time with purpose and meaning; time that is given and taken.

Healing is conceptualised as both journey and destination: an intensely personal process of exploration in which we found ourselves. Interacting with our environment we made connections, developing understanding and wisdom. With time and hard work we integrated these experiences into our sense of ourselves, restoring our integrity, becoming whole; and in this process of transformation our suffering was relieved.

A place that was healing was one that offered safe haven, holding us enough in a collaborative environment of care, hope and trust; while providing or creating space and opportunities for the hard work of exploration that underpinned our healing.



Karl Maughan

Liggins, J. (1992). The rhodo's are flowering again. *Mental Health News, Spring*, 5-6

Liggins, J., Kearns, R. A., & Adams, P. J. (2013). Using autoethnography to reclaim the 'place of healing' in mental health care. *Social Science and Medicine, 91*, 105-9

Liggins, J. (2016). A place for healing in mental health care and recovery. *Thesis (PhD-Psychiatry), University of Auckland*

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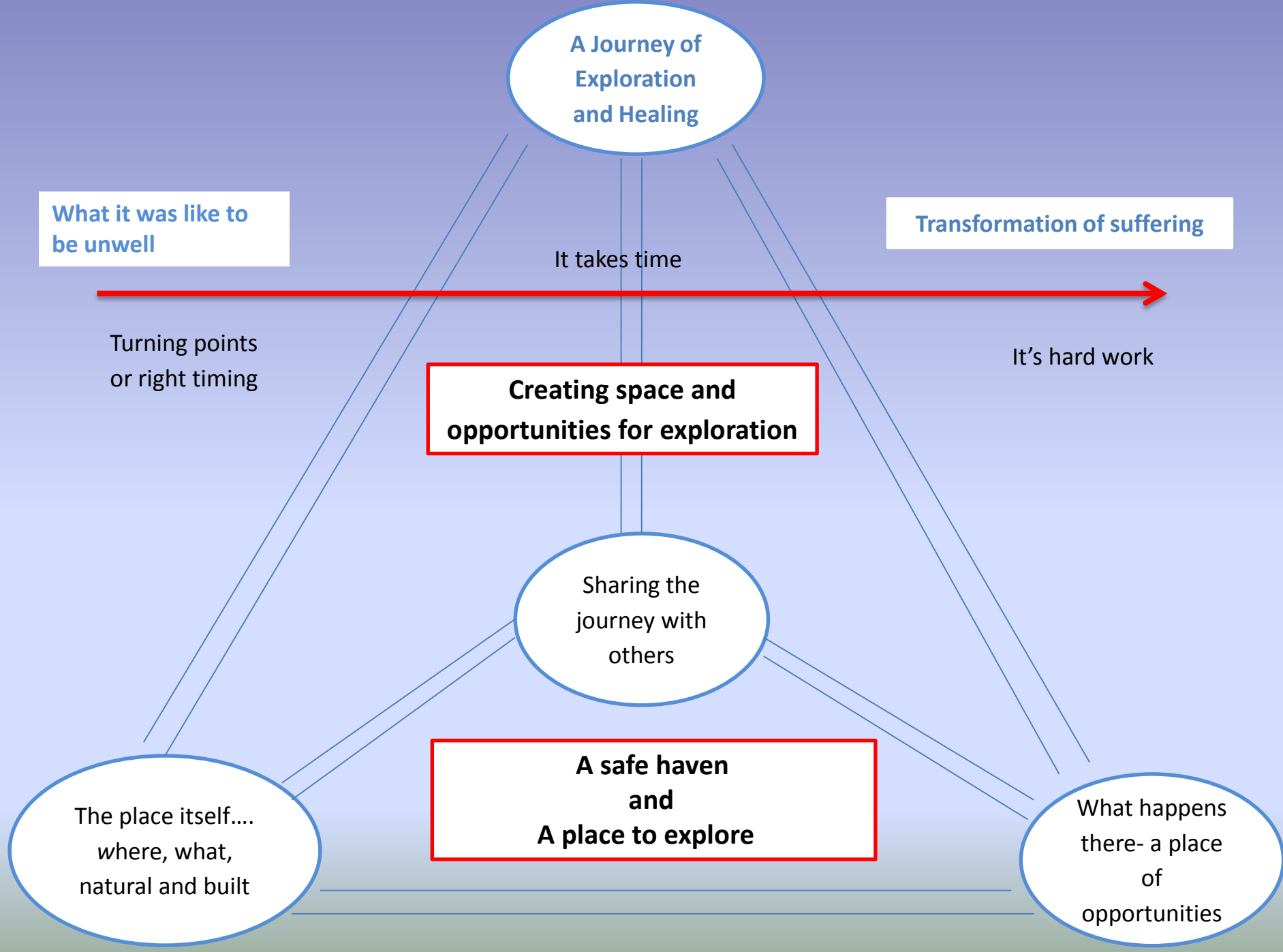
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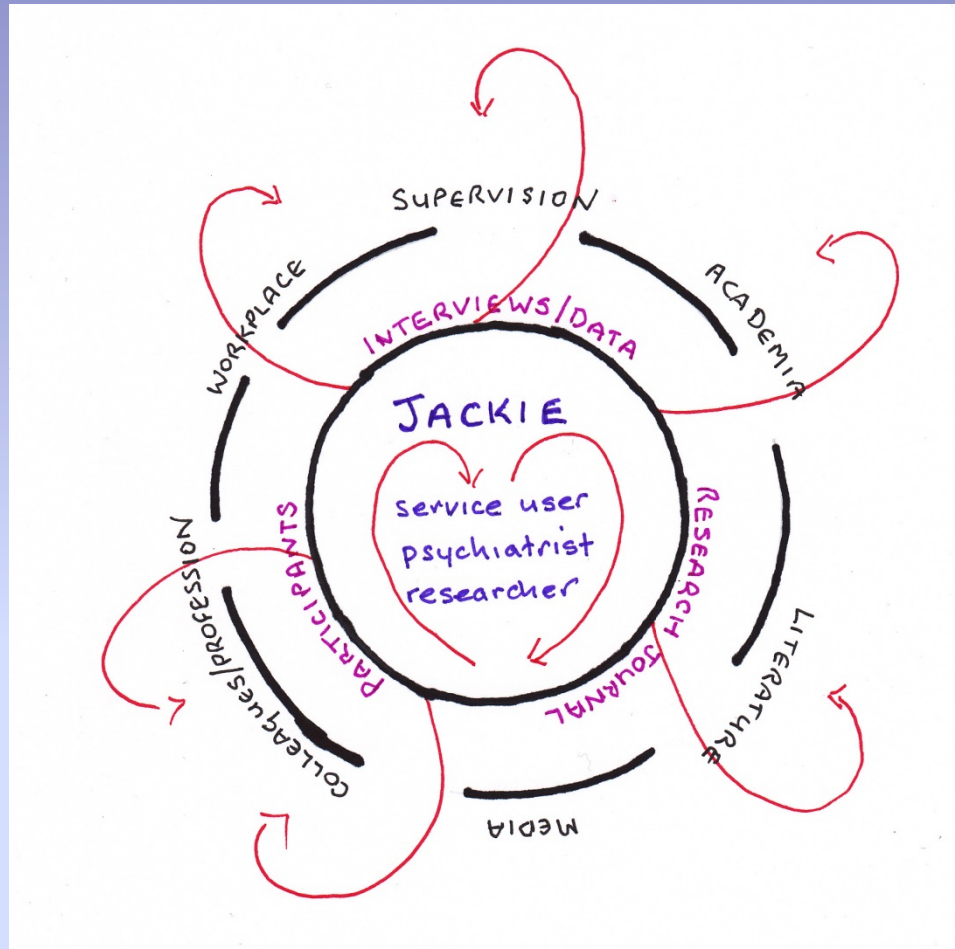
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Autoethnography: a methodology for the heart

- Auto-(self) ethno-(culture) graphy-(study)
- It is about the personal ... often used to research things that are hard to talk about
- Creates space for multivocality
 - researcher/service user/psychiatrist
 - includes collaborative forms



Autoethnography

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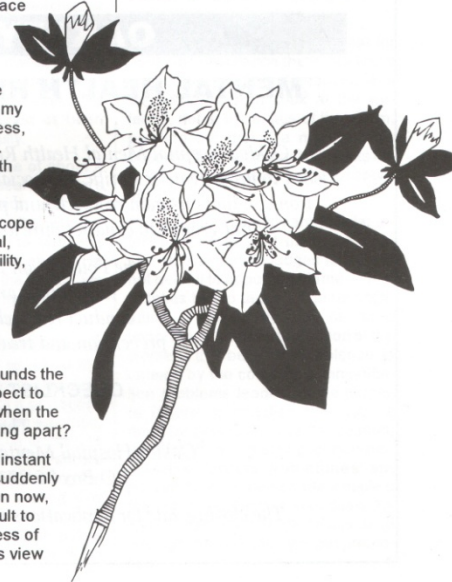
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- Analysis and understanding arises from a “back-and-forth-gaze” from the inward, exposed, vulnerable self and outward to the social and cultural context.
- Autoethnography as research and writing:
 - Spectrum from highly evocative writing to the more conventional, analytical
 - will usually be in first person, free of academic jargon, and evocative, making it accessible to a wider audience



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healing the heart of recovery

Healing is the intensely personal process at the heart of recovery.

The capacity to heal is a universal, albeit unique, human experience.

the journey of healing

Healing is a journey towards wholeness and wisdom, and involves exploration, connection, understanding and integration.

Healing is a journey that is hard work and takes time; and in this process suffering is transformed, perhaps transcended.

a maelstrom of
confusion

desperate... so much
running from what I didn't
understand

my vulnerability was
raw

battered and drowning

Suffering

that fierce fire that is
within me

fearful ... terrified ...
deeply concerned

the excruciating pain I was in

... switched off,
gone away

losing ourselves

none of it made
sense

am I now my
illness?

distrust ... you,
me, myself

what it was like to be unwell

You lose everything that
you are

Disconnection and
fragmentation

Relentless, hopeless,
stuck

Cassell: “**suffering** occurs when an impending destruction of the person is perceived”.

disengaging from everything
... I stopped talking

the biggest fear is that I
won't come back this time

I stayed to myself for so
long ... I became stunted

Disconnection

I ran away into a
deep dark hole

the world didn't
seem real

that loss of connection with the
world ... my sense of where I was
and who I was supposed to be

a world with no colour ... noise
but no noise

My being becomes
challenged ... fragmented

Shattered, smashed,
broken

I can't keep it
together

The blocks that were
scattered...

Fragmentation

Scattered ... jumbled

My world fell apart
... I fell apart

This uncontrollable beast- an
illness outside my control

Exploration places the possibility with the explorer, implying that we are not passive (or even active) recipients of care; rather we are active participants making use of the multifarious opportunities available or created.