



EXPRESSING THE VOICE WITHIN

by Jarek Czechowicz

Expressing The Voice Within is the name of a program commissioned and hosted by BIM, funded by City of Melbourne, and facilitated by the author, Jarek Czechowicz.

The program includes instrumental music, singing, relaxation, mindfulness and creative techniques that will assist participants to create a collaborative artistic work.

Key participants in this program are people who have an ABI, however members of the general public are also welcome to attend and experience the program.

The ABI participants are contributing material for a book that will be launched mid-year at the Melbourne Town Hall or some other suitable venue. The content of the book will also be posted on BIM's website.



Inspiration is the main theme and contributors are offering a few words of wisdom, a poem, an aphorism, a drawing, or a photo that will inspire readers to enjoy a better quality of life.

A typical session includes some acoustic guitar music and group singing. This helps people to overcome any inhibitions and it sets a positive tone for collaborative work.

Then there are talks and examples relating to creative practices. Everyone is encouraged to note or draft their ideas for further development at home. Some have chosen to meet socially to develop their ideas together. Each session ends with some refreshments and conversation.

At the second session Damien Melotte, a professional designer, offered insights about his creative approach to design:

www.ecoresonance.org/ecoDesign.htm

At the third session physiotherapist and musician Paul Watt offered music on his tabla (Indian hand drums). John Edeny, a gifted artist and ABI contributor to the book, summed up the

feeling in the room on one occasion when he said, "I wish it didn't end."

Sessions are currently running in the Mezzanine Room at Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane Melbourne. The session times are 11:00am to 1:00pm Thursdays February 8 & 22, March 8 & 22, April 5 & 26, May 10 & 24. The book launch date and venue is yet to be announced.

This project was made possible by funding from The City of Melbourne, thanks to a funding submission by BIM volunteer coordinator Lyn Macdonald.

Amongst other things Lyn is coordinating travel support for ABI participants. She has offered to make additional times available at Ross House for those who wish to meet socially in the city to develop their creative work for the project.

For more details ☎ (03) 9639 7222



Living
the Arts

FUNDING FOR BIM

In the past, BIM has always been funded through "one off" grants and donations. This has now changed.

After more than 10 years, BIM now has recurrent funding from the state government. We have recently been granted \$22,000 a year, guaranteed for 3 years. While this year may not seem like a lot of money to some disability groups it is welcomed, and appreciated, by all at BIM.

Our new funding will be used to pay the rent, book keeping and office admin costs, travel costs for members attending meetings, social lunches and many other things. We plan to create a new website and start speaker training again.

Many thanks to the workers at the Department of Victorian Communities who have been very

supportive of us and in particular to Arthur Rogers (the Executive Director, Disability Services). They have had faith in our group and helped us to survive and continue our self-advocacy and community education work.

CENTRELINK PROBLEMS? TELL YOUR STORY!

Have you had problems with Centrelink, employment services, or getting work? Has "Welfare to Work" affected you?

Brain Injury Australia wants to hear your story!

We will use the stories in our own work. We will also give them to the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations. AFDO is working to make income support fairer for all people with a disability.

For more information, call Ria:

 9329-3039

 strongria@gmail.com

Ria is on the board of Brain Injury Australia, and represents them on AFDO.

CHRIS PRESENTS IN MEXICO

This is a brief account of Chris Rotering's attendance at Mexico City's International Inclusion Conference.

I was a volunteer at the 13th International Inclusion Conference that was held in Melbourne 2002.

As soon as I found out it was to be held again in Acapulco in 2006 I said straight away that I would go to it.

After a brief look at America I was flown to Mexico City. After a delay due to security we missed our original flight to Mexico.

On arrival in Acapulco I went straight to the site of the conference the hotel Fairmont Acapulco hotel where I registered and was taken to the Asta Hotel where I stayed for the conference.

I missed the first day and on arrival I met Allan and his carer and later I met Heather and Toni. As we were to give our talk that afternoon we needed to plan our presentations. Due to the mess up by the organisers we had to move to the other side of the hotel to give our talks.

After I gave our talk on having a say I was immediately overcome with thanks and questions which I answered to the best of my ability.

It seems here in Victoria we are leading the world in our help for persons with a disability I have found the conference was a bit of a let down as it was not as well organised as the one we held in Melbourne.

I found Mexico is absolutely beautiful the only problem was they could not speak Australian English.

BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS WEEK

Bear in Mind held two events for Brain Injury Awareness Week in September.

BRAIN POWER

On Thursday September 21, we launched our "BrainPower" project in Port Melbourne. This Project was funded partly by the City of Port Phillip with assistance from Headway Victoria and Holding Redlich solicitors.

Janet Bolitho, the mayor of Port Phillip, opened the event. As it was International Day of Peace, the day included Peace Music and chanting facilitated by Jarek Czechowicz. Kagali dance theatre performed, Ria spoke about self-advocacy, and Lara shared her personal journey.

It was a successful, well-attended event.

Peta Ferguson was introduced as the facilitator for the ongoing BrainPower group which now meets monthly in Port Melbourne on the 1st Wed of each month @ 11.30 in the Community room, Liardet Street (above the supermarket)

SNAKES AND LADDERS

On Friday September 22, Bear in Mind West joined with RuralAccess Hepburn/Moorabool to hold a "Snakes and Ladders" community awareness event. An art exhibition was also held on the day. Our version of Snakes and Ladders game was one with a twist—played in teams, with human game pieces, questions and stories, and a board the size of a small room.

In the weeks leading up to Brain Injury Awareness Week, Bear in Mind West members wrote new questions and stories about ABI to add to the game; these were launched at the event, and will now tour the state as part of the game.

ON SELF-ADVOCACY

Bear in Mind is a “self-advocacy” organization. Ria Strong spoke about this at our BrainPower launch during Brain Injury Awareness Week.

She began her speech with a poem: “In a dead end Day Centre I once sat, guzzling bad coffee and wheezing in the smoky air... Now I fight for better access, I educate the people, I work to change assumptions, I want to change the world...”. She then talked about her reasons for being a self-advocate, and about self-advocacy more generally.

What is self-advocacy? Self-advocacy is about **speaking up** for yourself, and standing up for **rights**—your rights, and the rights of other people with disabilities. It’s about making real **choices**, learning **new skills**, and **supporting each other**.

For some of us, self-advocacy means having **more control in our own lives**. For some of us, it means working to **change things in the community** (like a building we can’t get into). For some, it means **having a say on bigger issues** (like how disability services work, or government policy). For some of us, it means all those things.

There is power in numbers.

Together we are stronger. We all have different skills and experiences, and we can all help each other. **Everyone has something to share** (even if it’s hard for them, or others, to see what it is).

When we get involved in self-advocacy, our lives often change in other ways. We become more confident, and feel better about ourselves. We make new friends.

We find out about other groups, and things happening in our community. Some of us go back to study or work (paid or unpaid).

In many ways, self-advocacy can **make things better** for people with ABI (and others, too).

More information about self-advocacy is available from the Bear in Mind library.

I KNOW MY PROBLEMS

How many times as it been said have you a problem with that?

When I am ignored because I cannot converse as well as you, yes I have a problem with that.

If I am laughed at instead of laughing with me, yes I have a problem with that.

Judged on what I cannot do instead of what I can do, yes I have a problem with that.

Looking away from me rather than acknowledge me, yes I have a problem with that.

Treating me like a no one rather than a someone, yes I have a problem with that.

I know my problems and my problems—however much I try—will not go away, as they are from ABI.

But when other people know my problems and will not accept them, then instead of me seeing problems I am inclined to be pissed off.

Luckily for me and many others who have ABI most people understand this. But there will always be some who cannot or will not try to understand this.

Please do not be one of them.

MYSTERY MAN

(Read at our "Snakes and Ladders" event on September 22)

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What is Bear in Mind?

Bear in Mind works with people living with Acquired Brain Injury to make life better.

Members have access to:

- ◆ Information and peer support
- ◆ Skills development and training
- ◆ Newsletter and other publications
- ◆ Volunteer work opportunities
- ◆ Special events and projects
- ◆ Social lunches in Central Melbourne
- ◆ Comprehensive library
- ◆ Trained Bear in Mind speakers

Contact us on (03) 9639-7222 or bim_statewide@yahoo.com.au for more information.