Shedding the Light on Anxiety – An online event facilitated by Tod Sullivan

Saturday 18th April 2020, starting at 6pm, on Facebook

If you would like to contribute to the conference, or if you would like to watch and or share it, on Facebook on the 18th April from 6pm, please follow the link where we will be broadcasting it <https://facebook.com/events/s/shedding-the-light-on-anxiety-/213552336557613/?ti=icl>

We can also provide a link if you wish to share the feed to your page or profile.

Tod Sullivan

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Background to this conference… building community resilience through Coronavirus…

Around two months ago, and especially over the past four to six weeks I became concerned that communities were not realising the full impact of a potential government response to Coronavirus, as the seriousness grew there appeared to be a lack of understanding of the consequences. I had also been sharing through my fellowship learning for some time that for us to see resilience grow in our communities we would need to have far more responsive health and social care systems – more local and more able to ask ‘what do you need’ rather than ‘prove you need us’.

It has for some time appeared to me that communities and indeed families had ‘outsourced’ compassion, centralising it through government services rather than being a full part of the health and well-being of one another. Through my fellowship I had seen that where resilience grows it is when communities feel safe, connected, and heard and since learning this I have come to realise that all successful healing relationships need those three things in place to work.

My concern through Coronavirus was that although humans have all of the innate skills needed to emotionally and physically survive the isolation of the lockdown phase of the strategy they had learned over years that their feelings needed to be explained rather than justified. For example a newspaper headline read ‘1 in 4 people in the region are lonely’ this is of course untrue, 100% of people in any region feel loneliness at some time – and thank god they do as loneliness is the way that we learn how important human contact is, anxiety literally keeps us alive, without hunger we starve to death.

Allied to this learning it is my belief that we live in an unprecedented age for remote communication, we have social media and mobile telephones, we have broadband and 5g, few people are friends purely with people who are within shouting distance. For us to not only survive isolation but to learn how to rebuild our communities I believe that we need more than ever to hear the lived experience of people who I have met, people with a lifetime living with feelings of anxiety, who know that you can imagine and experience the worst that can happen and survive it. It is those stories and those experiences from whom we can learn the most at times of greatest emotional challenge.

So, to today, for some years I have been running mental health conferences based on the lived experience of people who have experienced trauma and challenging mental health. We began in 2011 with a remarkably brave man called Patrick who remains my friend, he shared with us his childhood abuse and subsequently the impact of it and his healing journey. As we shared more stories we attracted more and more incredible people, Dan Biddle who survived the 7/7 terror attacks, spent 12 months in ICU and eventually found the love of his life after PTSD had taken more away from him than the bomb which took his legs. Josh Connolly witnessed the most unbearable tragedy as a child, developed his own issues with substances but learned from it and now inspires thousands of people with his messages.

The blessing of my fellowship has been to add to these stories a remarkable network of people from another country who understand and have built resilience in their communities in the United States, from Jen who helped design a trauma informed approach in schools in Oregon, to Kody understanding communities in Kitsap County, all the way to Teri In Walla Walla who is the most remarkable community leader I have ever met changing her world and the one around her.

So what better time for me to host the most wonderful conference of my life, bringing together people from my journey around the world from Dublin to Dubai and Boston to… Boston, at the same time sharing learning and Shedding The Light On Anxiety and Isolation Through Coronavirus using their unique experiences and knowledge. I hope to do this live, covering topics from anxiety and isolation, grief and loss, home schooling, managing your loneliness. We will hear from talented musicians with a story to share, poets, and brave people who have survived the worst that can happens and can help you to do that now.

So, I do hope people will join me on 18th April, and learn from some of the incredible people who have taught me so much, we will be doing so through the inspiration of the words of Winston Churchill.