

# SATURDAY 20TH JAN 2024

*With Lavinia Donling*

## ROADTRIP OVER

We finished our road trip by meeting up with Ginny, one of our amazing Non Executive Directors, more affectionately referred to as our NEDs. It has been a year since we last saw Ginny, so it was really great to catch up with her over lunch in Ledbury. The town, if you have never been, is full of old buildings that are a type of heavy duty plaster and wood, with some really interesting and quaint shops, and some really lovely places to eat at. We talked loads, but laughed so much, and are often taking the mickey out of each other in and amongst the more serious conversations. It is also a lovely opportunity to reflect over the year and consider new directions on the beckoning horizon. We are naturally very excited about Ellie starting with us as our Education Consultant, and, as you can probably appreciate, her role came into discussion.



It is hard to believe Ellie has completed her first week with us. Ginny and the other NEDs have all had individual conversations with Ellie to consider ideas that she has put forward, as much as learning about one another. We are incredibly fortunate that the NEDs have been with us a long time, and so can support Ellie with their knowledge and understanding of the businesses. One aspect of Ellie's job will be uploading pieces of information from a Teacher and SEN Parent perspective on to our fb community page - so keep a look out for those.



#### B U S Y B E E

This week I had 2 reports to write in preparation for meetings with Local Authorities/ NHS. These reports are really quite complex in that when I first meet with a family, I complete a Mental Health assessment, and, usually, followed by an Initial Screening. When I next meet with the family, I do a Partial Screening to see what is happening with the young person's mental health. This is really important to do, given that usually a year has passed by with the young person's mental health continuing to deteriorate in that time. So, you have the first screening as a baseline, and can then see the deterioration with nothing put in place by repeating the screening. However, you are then expected by the agencies to complete a report, and so you do another Partial screening to show what is working or not working. I then show the history through the data which provides further evidence. It is a big piece of work as it is complex, so when a parent responds with 'the report is fantastic', you know it has reassured them.

When the agencies understand how serious the situation is for the young person, you feel a major sense of accomplishment in helping the professionals understand the young person's difficulties not only from their Autistic presentation, but also from a Mental Health perspective.

I had a meeting with a parent and Case worker who asked if I was doing direct work with the young person. They looked quite perplexed with me saying no, and yet the young person is making good progress in their mental health recovery. How is this possible? Yet, the parent was saying it was working really well with my input being the steering rudder. Working with one, both, or either parent to support the young person indirectly is twofold - the first for mental health recovery, and the second to rebuild their resilience to protect against any future impacts on their mental health. Family resilience, in which the relationship of the family is vital for the development of a shared sense of resilience between its members (Walsh, 2011) is a really helpful way for a young person who no longer trusts professionals to work indirectly with me through their parent.

#### EVERYDAY RESILIENCE

I read a beautiful quote from an academic journal earlier this week - This "everyday resilience" diverges from more prominent definitions of resilience as recovering, bouncing back or flourishing. Findings from our study concur with the idea that *resilience is an "ordinary magic"* (Masten, 2001), in which people adapt and change to cope with the everyday difficulties they face. Countless times I have had parents say they are unable to explain how I help them make changes within their family, but changes do happen. Reading the quote, I was reminded of the TAG program where Steve referred to my work as "magic". My so called magic starts with the parents feeling able to work with me, as we quickly become a team, and explore predominantly behaviour, with words less so, and make sense of it all. Parents find by tweaking their skills to suit their Autistic child makes a more comfortable environment. Thus showing greater understanding, and then they are able to make their child more aware around emotional regulation. Over time, the young person recovers with their mental health, and is then able to rebuild their resilience (emotional strength). This then allows them to deal with more challenging or complex situations without regressing, being so impulsive, or deteriorating with their mental health.

So, have a lovely weekend, everyone.

*Lavinia*

Masten AS. Ordinary magic: resilience processes in development. *Am Psychol.* (2001) 56:227-38. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.56.3.227

Walsh F. Family resilience: a collaborative approach in response to stressful life challenges. In: Southwick SM, B. Litz BT, Charney D, Friedman MJ, editors. *Resilience and Mental Health: Challenges Across the Lifespan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2011). p. 149- 61. doi: 10.1017/CBO9780511994791.012