

Collective testimony from members of Luciole 92

This testimony is the result from several sessions during which members from Luciole 92 discussed social inclusion and the role played by the mutual help group in their recovery.

Nadine: For most of us, social exclusion has to do with joblessness and the realization that we cannot work. It makes us feel different from other people, useless and with the perception of a diminished life. We are more isolated because we lack the opportunity to socialize at work. Moreover, we often feel anxious because unemployment means that we have smaller earnings which prevents us from having a satisfactory lifestyle and from participating to recreational activities which would allow us to meet people and create relationships.

Georges: This isolation is heightened by the fear that we will be judged; so we tend to avoid social relationships and we feel compelled to hide our illness. We are under the impression that other people cannot understand us and therefore are caught in a vicious circle which makes us feel more and more isolated.

Patrick: The mutual help group is of great help in our struggle against loneliness. It allows us to compensate, to some extent, the void created by joblessness. We can get involved in the running of the association, suggest and run activities, participate to recreational workshops and outings to which we would not participate otherwise by ourselves because of a lack of money, motivation and courage.

Elisabeth: Coming to the association, giving us a goal for the day, helps us get up earlier and better organize our daily schedule, including when to take our medication. Attendance is completely voluntary. The mutual help group is not a medical outfit. It allows us to feel more responsible and to take charge of our lives.

Gael: At the mutual help group we meet people who have lived similar experiences which helps us feel less stressed out of fear of being judged. We feel we are welcomed and accepted for who we are. We don't feel as lonely as we are surrounded by people who have faced the same difficulties. This allows us to escape from the vicious circle of mental illness.

Frédérique: There is still quite a bit of work that needs to be done for the destigmatization of mental illness. Some of us cannot even tell their relatives or friends they attend the mutual help group for fear of being considered crazy and "ill". However, participation to the mutual help group has enabled many of us to make new friends and find relief from psychological suffering. In the mutual help group, we feel protected in a benevolent environment.