

# CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS MIND NETWORK

## Welcome Back, Community Members

Thank you for your continued support of the UMass MIND Clinical Research Program. The Central Massachusetts MIND Network (Previously the Central MA Psychosis Network) was developed to create a more inclusive community among patients, family members, mental health advocates, local organizations, and providers within the Greater Worcester Area. Over the years, we have shared groundbreaking research, local services, various events, and connected hundreds of community members. We hope that this network will continue to serve as a catalyst to promote collaboration within the Central Massachusetts community.

## Early Psychosis Presentation for College Students

As part of the “Public Education Series”, UMass MIND’s Community Intervention Program (CIP) recently held an educational webinar on early psychosis for college-aged adults. Previous research has shown that early psychosis most often develops in early adulthood, coinciding with the typical age of college students. When untreated, early psychosis may develop into a psychotic disorder, such as schizophrenia. Raising awareness of early psychosis detection and implementing treatment without delay has the potential to maximize syndromal and functional recovery. Therefore, it is our goal to increase detection efforts for early psychosis in college-aged adults and to break the stigma surrounding psychosis, so that individuals in need of treatment can get help quickly. (continued on page 2)

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## Early Psychosis Presentation for College Students

With people across the world isolated due to stay-at-home orders during the COVID-19 pandemic, we took action to modify a previously planned in-person seminar into a virtual webinar experience with a broader outreach.

Dr. Taylor Young, a Neuro-Psych resident, gave an insightful lecture that featured a unique, empathetic approach to patient perspectives of psychotic experiences, along with warning signs, and resources. Participants were encouraged to ask questions and engage with Dr. Young. Similar webinar events are planned for the near future. In addition, we are looking to hold education sessions on early psychosis for college counselors at local universities.



## Sharing Lived Experiences

### Rudy's Story of Overcoming Adversity: Fighting the Stigma

During a difficult time in his early 20's, Rudy Armando started experiencing feelings of depression and self-doubt while being unsure how to reach out for help. After a significant breakdown, he made the decision to check himself into UMass for answers. Many frustrations arose overtime due to consistent misdiagnosis and substance abuse which made everyday life a challenge. Mood swings, depression, and delusions made finding a diagnosis a difficult and time-consuming task. Rudy was diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder, along with a judgmental label that induced stigmatizing fear in his workspace. Rudy struggled to fit in with the workspace because he was belittled by co-workers and bosses. Social struggles left emotional scars which motivated Rudy to help others fight the stigma surrounding mental illness. He has continued his journey towards recovery from this point and has made inspirational leaps towards his own personal goals. With support from doctors, counseling programs and therapy, he became able to manage his mental symptoms. Rudy became a peer-advisor to help individuals in similar situations. Rudy is currently a member of the UMass MIND Consumer Advisory board where he provides valuable input into all our community programming. His goal is to educate and encourage people to seek help without judgment. his advice for those with similar lived experience is: "Look for help if you need it".



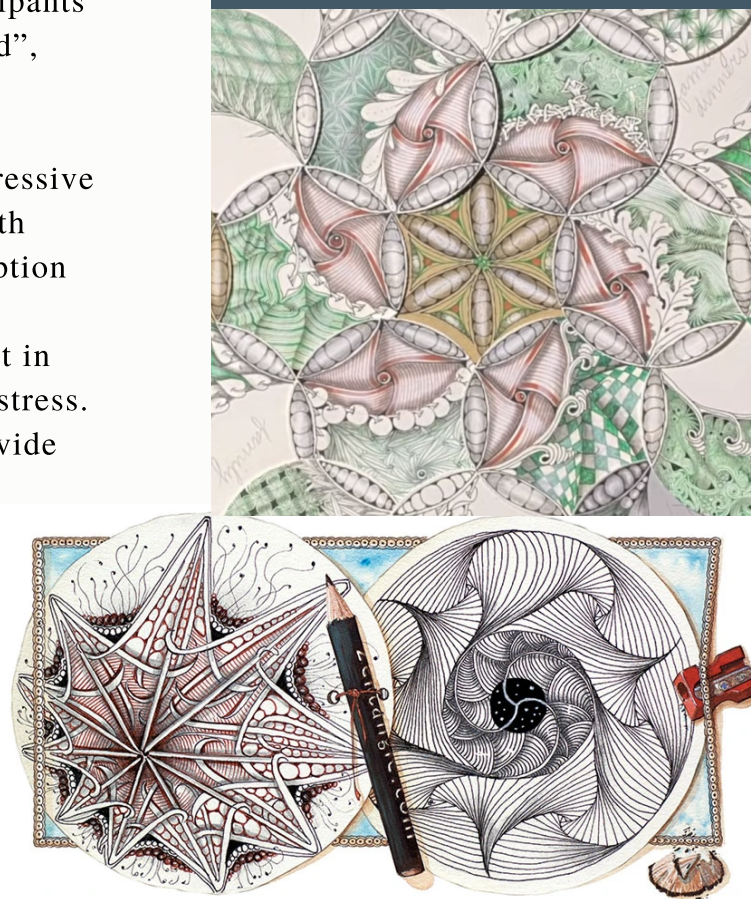
## Time to Tangle: The Zentangle Experience

The Zentangle method is a relaxing and creative artistic outlet that allows individuals to express themselves non-verbally through the creation of mosaic tiles. The Zentangle Method was developed by Maria Thomas and Rick Roberts over 15 years ago. Maria had been working on a large piece of lettering artwork for five hours when she was then interrupted by Rick, dramatically shocking Maria out of her high-focus state. Rick, well versed in Buddhism, related the heightened focus induced by Zentangle as a flow state, in which artists' extreme concentration distances them from their self-concept. Zentangle quickly grew and has since attracted and trained over 5,000 certified instructors in over 44 different countries. There is now even a “Zentangle Mosaic” app! In recent years, Zentangle has worked to not only create beautiful artwork, but also to identify the potential therapeutic benefits of the method. Participants in the Zentangle method found that as they “tangled”, their psychological burden was reduced, and their opinions of themselves were transformed as they overcame those barriers of self-criticism. This expressive form of therapy allows individuals that struggle with traditional talk-based therapies another potential option for expressing themselves. Zentangle may become another “tool in the toolbox” to help individuals get in touch with their emotions and feelings and relieve stress. UMass MIND and Zentangle have partnered to provide individuals with early psychosis the opportunity to engage in the Zentangle method.

More information on the program will be provided soon.

**"Life is an art form and each of us is an artist"**

ZENTANGLE FOUNDERS



# On-Going Research

## Project #1

### COVID-19 Education and Support Program

We understand that individuals with mental illness and their family members are facing serious and intensified mental, physical, and social health challenges due to our current circumstances. Community health workers (especially staff working in supportive residential facilities) are at times the only point of contact for social and emotional support. Fatigue, stress, and workplace burnout have become a new normal. In response, the UMass MIND has launched a virtual COVID-19 education and support program for individuals with serious mental illness, their family members, and community health workers. Docket # H-00020446

## Project #2

### The Dual-Diagnosis Study

Have you or someone you know been living with Schizophrenia or Schizoaffective Disorder? Do you or that person also use alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, or heroin? The purpose of this study is to see whether brexpiprazole, a recent FDA approved antipsychotic medication to treat schizophrenia, may help reduce substance use in individuals who are living with schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder. The medication is considered investigational for the purpose of the study as it is not approved to reduce substance use in people living with schizophrenia. You will be compensated for your time. Docket # H-00014611

## Project #3

### The Negative Symptoms Study

Are you experiencing negative symptoms of Schizophrenia or Schizoaffective Disorder? If so, you may be eligible to participate in a research study conducted at UMass Medical School. The purpose of this study is to see if an investigational drug has effects on negative symptoms of Schizophrenia or Schizoaffective Disorder. You will be compensated for your time. Docket # H00016707

If you are interested or would like more information on any of our studies, please call 508-856-MIND (6463) or email [MIND@umassmed.edu](mailto:MIND@umassmed.edu). Study #1 will take place virtually either through telephone or video chat. Studies #2 and #3 will take place at 26 Queen Street in Worcester.



## UMass MIND

Clinical and Research Program

Beautiful Mind | Productive Life

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