

# Rethinking Psychiatry returns with 'Truth and Reconciliation'

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Rethinking Psychiatry, along with two other local grassroots organizations, The M.O.M.S. Movement and The Icarus Project, hosted two Truth and Reconciliation circles in 2016.

The Truth and Reconciliation events were created to foster healing and greater understanding between receivers and givers of mental health treatment. We are now planning a follow-up event for Wednesday, March 1. Like the first event, this session will focus on the experiences of receivers and givers of mental health services.

Both events last year had great turnouts and were rich, powerful evenings. We received overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants, and most requested that we continue these events.

Truth and Reconciliation is structured to create a respectful and empowering atmosphere, where a variety of experiences and feelings are welcome. We recognize that that these are complicated issues. Many people, those who have been patients and/or those who have worked in the system, have complicated and

powerful feelings about their experiences with the mental health system. The event brings out the complexity of the issue by drawing out each individual's unique and common experiences.

As with last year's events, the evening will begin with a moving meditation exercise, to help the group transition from the rest of their days and feel grounded. This will be followed by an icebreaker activity to acknowledge who is in the room. Then we will move on to the heart of the evening.

The evening's discussion, like last time, will consist of inner and outer discussion circles. First, people who have received mental health services will be given the opportunity to participate in the inner "fishbowl" circle, while the outer circle – made up of providers, family, allies and other community members – bear silent witness. The outer circle of people listening is an active and critical role in this event.

Then, people who have worked in the mental health system will be invited to form an inner circle, while survivors, family, allies and other community members listen reverently. Many who work in the system do so because of our own

experiences with extreme emotional/mental states, and so some of us will choose to participate in both circles. Some of us, whether we identify as consumers or workers, or if we are neither, will not join either inner circle. Some may choose to show up in the inner circle but not to speak. It is important that there is no pressure to speak, but the event tries to create as safe a space as possible for people to speak if they are so moved, to tell the truths of their experiences. Some perhaps for the first time.

Finally, with everyone sitting in one large circle, people will have a chance to ask "questions of genuine curiosity" of one another. People will be encouraged to think about whether they are trying to make a point with their question, or whether they are genuinely curious to learn about something from someone who may share a different perspective.

Picture it: people whose roles as patient and provider, with an enormous chasm of power difference between them, sitting in a circle together, able to ask real questions of one another as equals, at least while in this circle.

We are aware that for many this will be an intensely emotional experience. We will

have facilitators and peer support people to help keep the event deeply respectful and to offer support during and after to any who may need it.

As before, there will be a break in the middle of the event for refreshments. We ask that people arrive to the event on time, so as not to disrupt this vulnerable group process. There will not be any recording or picture-taking of any kind allowed.

Once again, this event will be from 6-9 p.m. at Unite Oregon, 700 N. Killingsworth St. This is the same location that both events were held last year. At the time of last year's events, the organization was known as The Center for Inter-Cultural Organizing. Their new name is Unite Oregon, but they continue to do the same amazing grassroots work. This event is free, though donations are, of course, welcome.

*For more information, please visit our website, [www.rethinkingpsychiatry.org](http://www.rethinkingpsychiatry.org) or Rethinking Psychiatry's Facebook page. If you have any questions, feel free to e-mail us at [rethinkingpsychiatry@gmail.com](mailto:rethinkingpsychiatry@gmail.com)*

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