



MATT SKELLERN
BIPOLAR TRUST



FINDING BALANCE

INSPIRING NEW SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH BIPOLAR

THE TRUST'S WORK AND OBJECTIVES

www.ms bipolar trust.co.nz

CENTRE OF INNOVATION

AN INSPIRING PLACE TO REBUILD A LIFE

Matthew Skellern, a talented and creative town planner and sportsman, took his life at the age of 30 in May 2012 because living with bipolar and its huge mood swings became too difficult.

He said in his parting note to his family: "My bipolar is too much for me. It is far worse than I have treated it. I feel hopeless in that I don't feel I can live a happy life. I have gone on major ups and downs for many years and now reflect I cannot find the balance ... I'm just leaving to find a new place, resting for a while."

Matthew had tried medication, therapy and the in-patient service, and needed more opportunities. He needed services, including peer support, that he felt comfortable and safe with; that could rekindle his hope; and equip him with the skills and knowledge to navigate the immense difficulties living with bipolar can present.

**MATT SKELLERN
BIPOLAR TRUST**

"I CANNOT FIND THE BALANCE ... I'M JUST LEAVING TO FIND A NEW PLACE, RESTING FOR A WHILE."

MATTHEW SKELLERN

The Matt Skellern Bipolar Trust, incorporated in March 2013, was established to inspire new and effective services for people with bipolar – and to increase public awareness and reduce the associated stigma.

To begin with, the Trust is embarking on an in-depth feasibility study, conducted by Emma Skellern, a psychologist, accomplished mental health researcher and sister of Matthew.

Her study is dedicated to identifying needs and instilling more hope and support for people like Matthew to find the balance in their lives. The study will draw from new and best practice here and overseas to create the blueprint for a centre of innovation for people with bipolar.



EMMA SKELLERN

The current vision is a centre located on a rural and peaceful property, and is designed as a place to rest, nurture and rebuild lives.

Given the right support, people with bipolar can harness the gifts and talents that so often come with their extremely sensitive and creative dispositions, and they can lead very successful lives.

The centre could also offer a haven and place of learning for other people who experience a range of mental health difficulties.

NOTE: The Trust board has chosen to use "bipolar" rather than the longer term "bipolar disorder".

MORE ABOUT MATT SKELLERN

BIPOLAR TRUST OBJECTIVES

- * To promote the mental health and wellbeing of people with bipolar of whatever ethnic origin, age, or gender.
- * To promote and encourage research introducing new and more effective services for people with bipolar, such as a centre of innovation, and to disseminate (publish) the knowledge gained.
- * To contribute to reducing the stigma and discrimination surrounding bipolar.
- * To contribute to reducing the suicide rate for people with bipolar.
- * To support and assist any individuals or organisations concerned with investigating the nature and treatment of bipolar, and promote work to enable people to live well with bipolar.
- * To stimulate public interest and education in the promotion of mental health, particularly bipolar, through the media and other means.
- * To acknowledge and uphold the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi/Tiriti o Waitangi.



Matthew Skellern, pictured, was a successful town planner and sportsman, and a member of the New Zealand Planning Institute and Surf Protection Society's executive committees. He helped develop a mentoring programme for young planners, and he was completing a Master's Degree on Creating Official Surfing Reserves in New Zealand. He took his life in May 2012 when bipolar became too much for him.

“... THANK YOU
FOR EVERYTHING
YOU HAVE DONE FOR ME.”

MATTHEW SKELLERN



THE TRUST IS NOW FUNDRAISING TO HELP TURN ITS PLANS INTO REALITY

MORE ABOUT THE CENTRE

- * Provides a refuge for people with bipolar to weather out the storms (highs and lows), supported by others who care and understand.
- * Provides a safe and therapeutic environment, and is an alternative to in-patient unit treatment when appropriate.
- * Where people with bipolar go to acquire more skills and knowledge to better navigate the mood extremities; the centre will enable these people to respond to warning signs (early intervention).
- * Incorporate the best of clinical practices, with other effective practices such as peer support (people who have navigated the highs and lows of bipolar), meaningful involvement of family, therapeutic group work, talking therapies, healthy diet and exercise.
- * It could offer the holistic approach to health present in the Maori model, Te Whare Tapa Wha. This model recognises that wellness is achieved through balance in the domains of physical, family, mind and spirit.
- * A key part of the support can be physical work on the land in a rural setting at the person's own pace – the activities could include gardening, cooking, building, and looking after animals.
- * Creativity can be very important, where people have the opportunity to express themselves and channel their talents, passions and skills. A creative space could be established to provide resources and offer workshops run by visiting professionals.

SO WHAT IS BIPOLAR

Bipolar, previously known as manic depression, is one of the severest forms of mental illness which occurs in one per cent of the population (in New Zealand). It is a recurring disorder which affects a person in different ways.

Although we all have fluctuations in our mood, the changes people with bipolar experience are more pronounced and often unpredictable. There will be alternating periods (or episodes) of feeling high (mania) and deep depression, spliced with normal mood. Others will experience mixed states where symptoms of mania and depression are sudden and present in the same period of time.

People with bipolar can have long periods of wellness (months or years) but a small proportion suffer frequent episodes that are difficult to treat with medication and other therapies.

The disorder usually occurs before a person reaches 30 years, but can occur at any time in life. It can be genetic, it is chemical and stress is a contributing factor. There is no one cure, though self-management (establishing disciplines), a healthy lifestyle, psychological support and medication can lead to a better life.

Unfortunately, one out of three people with bipolar either attempt suicide or complete it because living with extreme mood swings become unbearable. The annual average suicide rate is 10 to 20 times higher than in the general population.

(SOURCE: D.M. Novick, H.A. Swartz, E. Frank. "Suicide attempts in bipolar I and II: A review and meta-analysis of the evidence". 2010).

MORE ABOUT THE FEASIBILITY STUDY

1. A national and international literature search will identify best and new practices for supporting people with bipolar and reducing the associated stigma.
2. Interviewing and profiling key people and organisations involved with providing support to people with bipolar, with a focus on two groups:
 - people who have experience of living with bipolar, including family members.
 - people with an understanding of how different cultures can support those with bipolar.
3. Research into the business and politics of creating a new service for New Zealanders – that is, a centre of innovating for people with bipolar and their loved ones.
4. During the study, the intention is to engage key people and local services to gain their buy-in for later implementation. The study and its results, which can be published, will open up communication channels and increase advocacy.
5. A business plan and budget for the centre will be prepared as part of the study.

"WE WANT TO INSPIRE HOPE AND CONFIDENCE FOR PEOPLE GRAPPLING WITH BIPOLAR. WE HAVE TO DO THIS."

GRAHAM SKELLERN

MEET THE TRUSTEES



Graham Skellern (chairperson),

Journalist and Consultant with Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development (ATEED). Formerly Bay of Plenty Times Business Editor, and Member of the Tauranga Sunrise Rotary Club. Father of Matthew Skellern and has first-hand experience of living with the difficulties of bipolar.

Janet Peters,

a Registered Psychologist NZPSS and New Zealand Liaison for the International Initiative for Mental Health Leadership. Janet undertakes contract work in the mental health and addiction sector. In 2012 she won the prestigious Public Interest Award from the New Zealand Psychological Society for her work over many years in the Like Minds and the National Depression initiatives.

Peter Tinholt,

General Manager Asia Pacific for Taura Natural Ingredients, and Member of Tauranga Sunrise Rotary Club, and of the Institute of Directors. Strong supporter of Cystic Fibrosis Association of New Zealand. Formerly Trustee of the Shares in Life Foundation (Cystic Fibrosis).

Brett Hewlett,

Chief Executive of natural health products company, Comvita New Zealand, member of the Better by Design Advisory Board and Director of Nasdaq-listed Derma Sciences Inc. Brett is a member of Tauranga Sunrise Rotary Club, and as a Rotarian for more than 15 years has been involved in a great number of community projects, both in New Zealand and overseas.

Claire Beard,

Occupational Therapist with experience in psychiatry and past member of the New Zealand Association of Occupational Therapy Board. Claire has been Team Leader Occupational Therapist at Royal London Homeopathic Hospital, and a Professional Advisor and Team Leader for Occupational Therapy at Tauranga Hospital.

PROVIDING RENEWED HOPE

A message from SIR JOHN KIRWAN

One day I was a happy go lucky JK, and one morning I stared in the mirror and didn't like the guy I was looking at. My biggest fear was that I was never going to be well again, and I was so scared they would put me in a straitjacket and lock me away. I had to get help and I just reached out.

That was the first step. If you tell someone about your disorder and they don't get it, then tell someone else till you find someone who gets it.

Depression and bipolar – there is a way through it. Know your triggers, your warning signs. Enjoy the little things and what is really good for you to get that balance. Take your mind away from the pressures and stresses in life, and try to actively relax.

I went to hell and back, and my way back to wellbeing was enjoying the little things in life. I found hope and I held onto it.

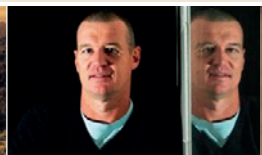
Maybe you can't see an end to the way you are feeling but there is a way through. There is hope. All I ask is for people who have never suffered depression or bipolar to understand and accept someone who does have it.

I applaud the goals, initiative and work of the MATT SKELLERN BIPOLAR TRUST, which will provide new solutions for supporting people with bipolar and other mental health problems.

A centre of innovation specialising in bipolar will boost the mental health services in New Zealand and contribute to reducing the incidence of youth suicide which is the highest, per capita, in the OECD.

We all need to reduce the impact of depression, bipolar and other mental health difficulties on the lives of New Zealanders. We can do this through understanding.

Hei kona mai,
JOHN KIRWAN



CONTACT DETAILS

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