**Minding Mendocino**

By Jessica Maness, LCSW, Long Valley Health Center

**Passion-Taking the Leap (or at least a shuffle)**

Each and every one of us has something we desire to do; something that drives us, or feeds our soul; an idea or activity where we feel ourselves being whole and one with our purpose.  This is often the key to our very feelings of belonging and self-actualization.  If we lose connection with these aspects of “us”, it is easy to feel lost, stuck, separate, and sometimes misunderstood.  From this place it is quite easy to fall into apathy or a victim role in our lives.

To get back on track and be the driver of our own bus, we need to take a look at how we might have fallen out of our passion. Perhaps we allowed someone else to make our decisions. Maybe we began to make decisions to please someone else. Maybe we were afraid of some natural changes that were in front of us and we lost our way. If any one of these answers feel familiar, then you might be stuck in a victim role and need to ask yourself “How can I take charge of the steering wheel of my own life, again?”

Sometimes we have to do some things to get ready for a life change, in order to make sure we will stay as safe and balanced as possible through the transition.  For some, this may mean that we need a larger support system than the one we currently have.  For others, it means that we need to break ourselves away from a relationship or two that is not good for us.  Maybe there is a support group, or something larger than ourselves that could be helpful.  Maybe there is a creative project that has been laid aside.  Often a small shift can lead to larger changes, and this is movement!  Movement is the opposite of being stuck.  Checking in with ourselves periodically can be very helpful, because the truth of the matter is that only we know if we are living up to our potential.  Only we know when our excuses are only doing harm to our sense of purpose.

Some suggestions would be to participate in some free writing, or vision boarding.  Activities such as these can be quite helpful in getting in touch with our passion.  Free writing is an activity of the visceral and not necessarily the logical.  Therefore, punctuation and spelling are not important whatsoever.  The pen goes to paper and just starts writing, without thought as much as possible.  There is no brainstorming of what is to be written next.  Initially, there will be some surface statements but then the subconscious is able to become conscious as our writing deepens.

Vision boarding is accomplished by going through magazines and cutting out those pictures, words, or even parts of articles that attract us.  We do not have to know why they attract us, but we do roll with it. Some of the cuttings will align with what we want to do or accomplish with our lives in the near future, and others the more distant.  We then arrange these on a poster board of any size, shape, or color and place it in our environment where it can be seen.

We all get stuck sometimes as part of this human experience. This is an invitation to explore the options so that we can empower ourselves to have a new experience; an experience that is truer to our purpose and closer to our sense of belonging.  Remember, if you have any topics of interest that may pertain to this column please write to: Long Valley Health Center, PO Box 870, Laytonville, CA 95454 ATTN: Jessi Maness.