



The 'Keep the heid' newsletter! November 2020

[What's been happening?](#)

Given that the COVID-19 restrictions are continuing, our MAD activities have remained somewhat curtailed. However we did our super fantastic Halloween cookies at the end of last month and they went down a treat! You can find the recipe at the end of this newsletter.

We are also proud to let you all know that we submitted some of our lockdown challenge photos to the Scottish National Portrait Gallery for their 2020: Stories, Portraits, Visions exhibition and our first one is up. We picked a wee fun name to represent our group as we needed to submit under a specific name. We agreed we didn't want to single out one person as we're a team, so our pseudonym Maddie Madleston has submitted our photos for us. Here's our first one:

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL nationalgalleries.org. On the left is a photograph of burger ingredients: patties, buns, cheese, tomatoes, onions, and condiments, with two American flags in the background. On the right is the following text:

Burgers

Maddie Madleston

North Ayrshire

Story
Cooking challenge to keep the spirits up during lockdown!

Vision
North Ayrshire's Making A Difference (MAD) service user involvement group, provides a positive platform for our members to become included in the delivery of Justice Services. Service users can have their voices heard, continue to learn new skills and increase their confidence. The COVID-19 pandemic restrictions exacerbated existing issues that service users experienced - such as isolation, mental health problems, substance misuse and accessing services. We would like to share some of our images with you that reflect the challenges our members have taken part in – please keep your eyes out for our service users tips!

[#HappyMondays](#)

Our weekly positive reminders/affirmations continue over on our Twitter (@MADGroupNAC) – although we have had a little time off recently due to one of our members having a lot on his plate. Something he raised struck a chord with everyone about how difficult lockdown can be when you live on your own. We all shared about how we missed the social contact of seeing our friends and family and spending time 'in real life' with them. This is undoubtedly harder when you have the added challenge of trying to remain abstinent from substance misuse and to remain strong in your recovery. Some of our members used to regularly attend

recovery groups and found that the virtual meetings weren't quite meeting their needs. However, this is the 2020 way of life now, so we spent time discussing how we can manage this as best we can and sharing tips.

One of our group summed it up best by saying:

"So ma wee pearl ah suppose is that the zooms awesome but we need to be around like minded people! So take the chances when we can meet people outside and even go for a walk!"

[Andrew's story](#)

"I've been lucky, actually, I've been very lucky. After 20 years of drug use and addiction, I've been able to walk away from it all, with barely a scratch, especially compared to friends from that era that went through all the same things that I did.

So 20 years, drug addiction to heroin, amid other drugs, but mainly and predominantly my drug was heroin. I didn't have a troubled upbringing; I wasn't looking to escape anything awful that was happening in my life. I came from a nice family orientated background. Nothing nasty lurking in our closets, nothing that kept us awake at nights. Well, nothing more than the vast majority of the population, the normal issues, from money to relationships. What I'm trying to put across, to explain as best as I can is, I ain't special, in any way. I lived a pretty boring life, doing pretty mundane things on a day to day, week to week basis. I wasn't abused, I didn't have any mental health issues or learning difficulties. The point is, I have no one to blame for my addiction except myself. I can't point to anything in my life and say "Ahaa, that's why I did all that horrendous stuff, why I poisoned my body, destroyed my relationships. I don't have that luxury, that curse. I chose to do drugs, mainly from boredom and experimentation. Nowhere in my upbringing is the key to why I spent two decades enslaved to heroin and not giving any thought to my family or friends, who I know I hurt in some horrific ways. But then, I always could argue the point that it wasn't me, not really, that the drugs had taken such a grip on me that I had very little to no control over my actions. And that's fine, that would explain my actions if not excuse them. Hate the addiction, not the addict. True, there were things that I knew I would never bring myself to doing, but given the right circumstances, I honestly don't know if I would stick to the last shreds of morality. I'd like to think I would, but I did a lot of bad things, things I never really gave much thought to and even now, when I'm clean and sober, I don't give them as much thought as I probably should. I buried them, compartmentalized them, filled a box, like Pandora, full of all the evil deeds in my past life and I locked it up. Tight, real tight. But I know I'll have to deal with all of that at some point, and that both worries and terrifies me.

As I said, I've been lucky. I'm lucky enough to have my family back, to be building new relationships with people who don't think in terms of weight, money or crime. Who build me up, to be a better person, a better me. But, I know that not everyone will be as lucky as me, not everyone will have the support and love from both family but also a group of friends that only want the best for me, to see me succeed. And knowing that, knowing that you, whoever you are might have to go through all of what comes next alone, well, that terrifies me just thinking about it. God knows how scared you must be.

Jail never worked for me, in fact I don't think short term sentences work for addicts at all. You go in an addict and even if you manage to get clean inside, you still have the addict's mentality. Your body is clean, but your mind isn't. From my first sentence I would only think about getting out and getting a hit again. That's what got me through jail. I did detox, the valium and the one that you get in jail, in fact there was a couple of times that I did it cold turkey. But through it all, every pain filled moment, the only thought that helped me keep going, was the thought of that first charge. The flush of forgetting everything, the rush of the blood filled with drugs flowing in my veins. That and only that kept me going. One time, I was libbed (liberated from custody) at 9am and was in the car smoking heroin before we had even left the prison grounds.

I'm not proud of much in my life, I've hurt and used people, good, nice people, decent people, my family and friends whom loved me. There are things that I can't bare to remember because of the pain they cause me, from the pain I caused. But, at least I'm not alone. I have my family, my friends and a few very special people who are there for me if I need help. One in particular, but she knows who she is.

I don't know your story, I don't know your history, your pain, your thoughts. But I do know addiction and redemption. I know how hard the road is from one to the other and how long a journey can take. There are people that can help, no matter how dark it gets, how deep the hole. People care. They want to help. The only person stopping you leaving all this behind, is you. If you need help just ask, someone will hear you, someone will help. You are not alone. You never were.

Last but not least...

We wanted to share one of our cooking challenge recipes with you in each of our newsletters. This month we've chosen our 'MAD Lockdown' Halloween cookies.

Ingredients

- 300 grams of plain flour
- 1 tsp of bicarbonate of soda
- 2 tsp ground ginger
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- 125 grams of butter
- 100 grams of soft dark brown or light brown sugar
- 3 tbsp golden syrup
- Icing to decorate



Method

1. Heat the oven to 200C/fan 180C/gas 6. Mix the flour, bicarb, ground ginger and ground cinnamon in a bowl
2. Put the butter, sugar and syrup in a pan and heat gently until melted. Pour into the flour mix and combine to a dough (if it feels too stiff, add a drop of water to help bring it together)
3. Roll out the dough on a lightly floured worksurface or in-between two pieces of cling film or baking paper to about ½cm thick. Cut into biscuits using a gingerbread man cutter, then gather up the off cuts, re-roll and keep cutting until you have used up all the dough.
4. Lay onto two baking-paper-lined baking sheets and cook for 12-14 minutes until golden brown. Cool completely.
5. Once cooled, use your icing pens to decorate into skellies, mummies and other Halloween themes.

Anyone feeling motivated to try these who feels 'skellie season' is over could also consider a wee festive theme perhaps!

