

Safe Harbor (www.AlternativeMentalHealth.com)



Welcome to Alternative Mental Health News from [Safe Harbor](http://www.SafeHarbor.org), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Check out the latest research, information, and events below!

— Craig Wagner, Executive Director, Safe Harbor

[Visit Our Website](http://www.SafeHarbor.org)

Biomedical Research

Gut microbiome influences Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) and anxiety. A recent [study](#) may have found a link between gut bacteria in people with IBS and their behavioral symptoms. The study used healthy, IBS-free individuals, as well as two groups of patients with IBS: one group that also had anxiety and another that did not. Using fecal transplants, they transferred the microbiota from these humans into germ-free mice. After the transplant, the mice developed gastrointestinal and behavioral symptoms similar to those of their donors. This study provides data beyond a simple association, and towards evidence that changes in the microbiota impact both intestinal and behavioral responses in IBS.

Psychosocial Research

Lay health workers can deliver effective mental health care. Two different studies reached the same conclusion: mental health professionals are not necessarily required to achieve mental health recovery for depression and anxiety.

First, researchers [evaluated](#) a problem-solving intervention delivered by lay people to individuals with depression and anxiety in Zimbabwe. In *Friendship Bench*, the individual being treated identifies an issue in their life that they want to work on (e.g. unemployment), rather than identifying symptoms or receiving a diagnosis. A control group received a nurse-led evaluation, brief counseling, an option for medication, and referrals if needed. After 6 sessions, only 12-14% of people receiving *Friendship Bench* still had symptoms as compared to 48-50% in the control group.

Second, in India a brief psychosocial treatment was provided to people with depression by community members who receive only a short training. *Healthy Activity Program* (HAP) is a brief, manualized intervention based on the theory of Behavioral Activation in which an individual works to change behaviors that are often locked in a self-sustaining depressive loop. A control group received enhanced care by a physician. 64% of those receiving HAP achieved remission,

while only 39% of the control group were. HAP was acceptable, feasible, and cost-effective for those with moderate to severe depression, even when delivered by non-specialist health workers.

These studies highlight that non-professionals, given a clear intervention protocol, can significantly help those with depression and anxiety without the stigmatization of a mental health diagnosis and without professional intervention.

Wellness Research

Proper diet brings 1/3 of depressive individuals to remission. In a recent [study](#), adults with major depressive disorder were randomly assigned to receive either social support (known to be helpful for depression), or support from a clinical dietitian, over a three-month period. The dietary group received information and assistance to improve the quality of their current diets by increasing intake of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, fish, lean red meats, olive oil and nuts, while reducing unhealthy 'extras' foods, such as sweets, refined cereals, fried food, fast-food, processed meats and sugary drinks. At the end of the trial, 1/3 of those in the dietary support group met criteria for remission of major depression, compared to 8 percent of those in the social support group.

Eating fruit and vegetables is associated with reduced stress. A [study](#) of 60,404 men and women aged 45 and older examined the link between diet and distress. The study found that women eating 5-7 servings of fruits and vegetables each day had a 23% lower risk of stress, compared with women who consumed none. Women eating 2 servings per day still had a 16% lower risk of stress than those who ate none. Interestingly, the link between fruit and vegetable intake and reduced stress was much stronger for women than men.

Safe Harbor Partnering Efforts

Safe Harbor's first [Education Partner](#)! Safe Harbor is excited to announce our first alternative mental health education partner, [Integrative Mental Health for You](#) (IMHU), founded and directed by Emma Bragdon PhD. IMHU has an online, user-friendly platform that offers courses by experts in integrative mental health. Courses are for both professionals (Continuing Education Credits are available) as well as for those with a diagnosis and their loved-ones. Additionally, IMHU offers education on the spiritual dimensions of mental health including certification as "Spiritual Emergence Coach" and trips to Brazil to experience Spiritist care - a paradigm that combines Western mental health with care from "Spiritist" medical intuitives and healers. Safe Harbor followers get a 10% discount off of all classes on the education page. See our new [Education Page](#) for details.

Dan Stradford in a free interview series. Safe Harbor president, Dan Stradford, will be one of the speakers in an upcoming free interview series entitled, *From Wallflower to Daring Dancer, Kick Your Fear Habit and Live a Badass Life!* The series host, Judi Meredith, brings together a number of experts to share practical tools and strategies for overcoming fear so that you can live the life of your dreams. The summit begins on May 1st with new interviews delivered to subscriber's inboxes each day through May 15th. Judi is a seasoned licensed therapist, university professor, and dance teacher who overcame her fear and wants to help others become fear-warriors. Register [here](#).

Psychiatric Drugs & Withdrawal

10-year user-perspective of antipsychotic use - less is better. A recent [study](#) examined the experience of long-term antipsychotic use. 20 clinically recovered participants were examined ten years after initially being treated for first episode psychosis. These participants expressed that antipsychotics reduced their mental chaos during the acute phase of their psychosis. However, they also voiced that antipsychotics *beyond the acute phase* compromised their ability to contribute to their own recovery, and prolonged use reduced their chances of functional recovery. The downsides of antipsychotics were often seen as outweighing benefits beyond the acute stage. This study adds a human validation to the [20-year study](#) (see [Mad in America video](#)) that found that those with schizophrenia that are *off* of antipsychotics have a dramatically higher incident rate of recovery than those using them.

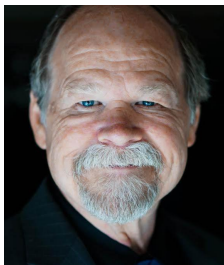
Conferences & Events

See our [robust practitioner events calendar](#)! Safe Harbor has created what we believe to be the most extensive practitioner events calendar for integrative mental health found anywhere.

The list spans nutrient and biomedical workshops (e.g. Walsh protocols), energy therapies (e.g. yoga and breathwork), psychosocial interventions (e.g. Open Dialogue, Hearing Voices Congress), drug withdrawal workshops, low-voltage brain stimulation (e.g. tDCS), spiritual approaches (e.g. Spiritist hospitals in Brazil), and more.

Please [send us](#) information on other events we should add to the calendar.

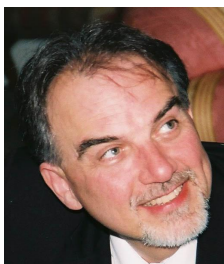
Staff



Dan Stradford, Safe Harbor President/Founder.

Dan is the lead author of a book for physicians, [Complementary and Alternative Medicine Treatments in Psychiatry](#).

He has published over 250 articles and technical papers. His writings and commentary have appeared in *Time Magazine*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *The Daily Record* (Scotland), the college textbook *Social Problems* and many other publications.



Craig Wagner, Safe Harbor Executive Director and editor.

Craig is an author, speaker, and educator in Integrative Mental Health.

His book, [Choices in Recovery](#), is the first to extract the full range of non-drug mental health therapies from the bowels of scientific research and transform it into a pragmatic recovery tool for those with mental health issues and their supporters. He is also a blogger for Mad in America. See www.OnwardMentalHealth.com for detail and a full bio.

Safe Harbor | [Email](#) | [Website](#)