

# WINTER 2017 PRRC COURSE CATALOG



## ACCEPTANCE & COMMITTING TO LIFE (ACT)

Serenity increases when we have the wisdom to accept the difficult things in life we cannot change and the commitment to change the ones we can. This class teaches skills from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) to help you:

- Accept your experience and be present in your life,
- Choose the values that mean the most to you, and
- Take action to live more fully.



## ART GUILD

Veterans work on their self-determined art projects in this art productivity class: 1) To take action steps toward full citizenship and community integration through the creative arts; 2) To visualize and actualize recovery goals through individual veterans' chosen means of artistic expression; 3) To improve physical stamina, manual dexterity and task-focused cognitive/affective processing; 4) To improve social skills by discussing and planning community integration around shared interests of class members; 5) To reduce stigma and isolation that may lead to relapse. Creative Arts Therapy staff and volunteers support mindfulness and problem-solving skills while encouraging Veterans in creating their art for exhibits in the community and the VA.



## ART THERAPY

Art therapy has a long history of helping people get better through the action of art-making. Art is a powerful tool to identify and process unresolved emotions that there may be no words for in talk therapy, but that get in the way of recovery. Class exercises help students refocus attention away from fears, pain and rumination into healthier engagement in expressive painting, line drawing, pastels, storyboards and collage. Students bring non-verbal thought and feeling patterns to awareness, improving their emotional expression, creating visual “maps” to their recovery goals.



## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

In this class, participants: 1. explore personal and societal values, feelings, and attitudes related to all types of relationship (friends, intimate partners, co-workers,

family) 2. Learn and practice skills for building safe, supportive, and satisfying relationships, 3. Explore relevant community resources related to relationships



## CBT FOR ANXIETY AND PARANOIA

Do you struggle with feeling nervous or uneasy in certain situations? Does anxiety sometimes leave you feeling “on edge”, suspicious, or paranoid about something bad happening? In this class, we will learn a variety of tools that may help you identify and cope with feelings of anxiety and paranoia, making them less likely to interfere with your ability to enjoy life. This class is based on cognitive behavioral therapy, or CBT, which has been shown to be effective in overcoming these types of obstacles. CBT can help you achieve your goals by looking at relationships between what you think, how you feel, and what you do. You can expect to take an active role in this class, and to practice the new skills you learn between sessions.



## CBT 101

In the CBT 101 class we will learn about Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, developed by Dr. Aaron Beck, and how to identify the tools used to manage and cope with symptoms of anxiety, depression, PTSD, and other conditions. CBT has been shown to be effective in overcoming a variety of mental health obstacles. Throughout this class we will learn about ways to support long-term change by examining the relationships between how we think, feel, and behave in different situations, circumstances, and environments so that we can enjoy a more fulfilling life.



## COMMUNITY PHOTOGRAPHY

This series of 2-hour photography and videography individual training sessions takes place out in the SF community: Experience and photograph interesting SF people, places and things. Grow your creative self-expression. Gather images of your unique recovery story. Experience better mental focus and flow/zone processes. SFVA creative arts therapy staff will provide individual support for portable skills, offering a variety of engaging practices for seeing and being in the present. Sessions begin from the lobby of the Veterans’ Building at 401 Van Ness, Fridays from 10am-12noon.

“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.” - Marcel Proust



## COPING WITH VOICES

This class teaches a number of different and helpful behavioral strategies to cope with hearing voices (or other auditory hallucinations or intrusive negative thoughts). Participants will get a chance to practice each strategy in class and will be encouraged to “put it to the test” in their daily lives. Veterans will also get a chance to discuss their experiences managing auditory hallucinations or intrusive negative thoughts in a supportive environment with peers who share similar experiences.



## DISCOVERING YOUR STRENGTHS

Many of us suffer from “strengths blindness” and as a result we tend to underuse our strengths. Knowing your strengths isn’t just interesting information. When skillfully applied, your strengths can actually have a significant positive impact on your life. Research shows that using your strengths can help you buffer against, manage and overcome problems, improve your relationships, and help you to have a happier, more engaged and meaningful life.

Participants in Discovering Your Strengths class will:

1. Identify and become aware of your unique set of strengths.
2. Practice proven strategies to build and develop your strengths.
3. Learn how to harness your strengths to help you move towards your goals.



## DUAL RECOVERY

This class is a place to learn about and discuss issues related to substance use and mental health. The atmosphere is welcoming and non-confrontational, and embraces both the abstinence model as well as the harm reduction approach. We will learn about addiction, how addiction interplays with mental health, and create individualized and comprehensive relapse prevention plans. There will also be videos shown, followed by discussion. Veterans facing any addictions are welcome, including Veterans struggling with tobacco addiction, gambling, sex or food addictions and problems with 'habit-forming' prescription medication.



## ENDING SELF STIGMA

The goal of this class is to help individuals who are living with serious mental illness overcome internalized stigma, and move towards goals that important to them. The class is based on cognitive-behavioral therapy and recovery approaches, with an emphasis on the cultivation of the self “outside mental illness.” Key topics include: stigma and stereotypes, internalization and automatic

thoughts, strengthening the self, dealing with discriminatory behavior, and increasing connection with others.



## EXPRESSING YOUR POLITICAL VOICE

This class will use elements of positive psychology, WRAP, and other techniques to focus on empowering oneself to have a political voice. Instruction and discussion of civics, media literacy and critical thinking will be included. All political points of view will be respected. The object will be to be clear and effective in presenting one's views to others. Benefits and challenges of political empowerment and acting as a group will be discussed, as will implications for Veterans as a group and the differences between political expression in military and civilian contexts.



## FOOD & FITNESS

This program will provide you with information, skills and motivation so that you can be successful in creating a healthier life. You will learn the effects of being overweight on both physical and mental health. Some you are probably already aware of, but others you may not know. This is a chance to not only learn why and how to get healthy, but to actually DO IT! People with mental illness who have taken this class lose an average of 8 pounds. So come join us in developing healthful habits while having fun.



## GROUP VOLUNTEERING

Are you interested in giving back? Do you want to create a meaningful role for yourself in the community, learn some new skills, meet some new people, or explore a range of different volunteer opportunities before committing to one? Or maybe you're looking for a way to sharpen up your work skills, beef up your resume, and/or develop some possible work contacts? Do you want to do all of this in a fun, low pressure, group setting with a group of fellow Veterans? If you answered 'yes' to any of these questions, you'll want to check out Group Volunteering, aka The Service Club!

Participants will meet weekly to:

1. Identify an area of interest for volunteering.
2. Find volunteer opportunities to match those interests.
3. Contact organizations to arrange group volunteer days.
4. Volunteer with the group!



## HEALTH WORKSHOP

Do you want to feel better, do the things you want to do, and be in control of your health? Then this workshop is for you. A series of classes that teaches you to self-manage your daily life activities in order to maintain and/or increase an active fulfilling healthy lifestyle.

Topics in the workshop include:

- \* Heart health
- \* Diabetes
- \* Obesity
- \* Cancer- colorectal, lung, prostate, skin
- \* Nutrition and Physical activity
- \* Prevention and treatment of common infectious diseases, HIV and STDs
- \* Doctor Visits- regular check-ups, screening tests, shots (vaccines), talking with your doctor.



## LET'S GET MOTIVATED!

Getting motivated can be a small hurdle or a giant obstacle and is something we all struggle with from time to time. In Let's Get Motivated Class, participants will learn skills for thinking, feeling, and behaving in ways that can help to improve motivation, such as:

1. Increasing positive feelings and sharing them with others.
2. Noticing and challenging the thoughts that keep us stuck.
3. Finding behaviors that provide a sense of pride and happiness and trying them out.



## ORGANIZING TIME

Do you ever have difficulty getting out of bed in the morning? Do you wish you could procrastinate less? Do you wish you could have more structure and balance in your day? Do you want to be able to organize, prioritize, and follow through with tasks more effectively so that you can achieve your goals? Do you want to have more satisfying routines and habits? Then, now's the time to make a change!

In Organizing Time Class, students will learn about and develop the necessary strategies, skills, supports, and tools to more effectively organize and manage their time so that they can be successful in all areas of life.



## PEER SUPPORT

The group is led by two VA Peer Specialists, who are themselves in recovery. A different recovery focused dialogue will be discussed weekly, and a mutual aid model of group work is utilized by the facilitators. This group is open to anyone who would like to participate. The group focuses on building upon ones' strengths with a specific emphasis on further developing coping skills for everyday life.



## READING FOR RECOVERY

This bibliotherapy class involves selected readings from the first-person recovery-oriented literature. Attendees will be asked to read and discuss selections from books and articles describing an individual's recovery stories. Some of the selections will be from the following: "I Never Promised You a Rose Garden," "The Center Cannot Hold," "An Unquiet Mind," "Free to Fly," and "Get Me Out of Here ." Reading and discussing recovery oriented stories can often inspire hope and serve to point out that recovery is real and possible. Veterans will also have the opportunity to create their own recovery story using a variety of media.



## RECOVERY 101

Recovery from serious mental illness is possible. But recovery involves more than just symptom reduction - it involves building a life you value and desire, a life that reflects your unique talents, strength, and values. This class explores the meaning of "recovery" and will include multi-media presentations such as videos and stories, as well as opportunities to create your own definition of what it means to be in recovery.



## RECOVERY IN YOUNG ADULTHOOD

This class will address common issues among young adult Veterans (21-40 years old), such as readjusting to civilian life, going to school, getting a job, managing family/relationships, and pursuing life goals. It will introduce coping strategies for managing obstacles to goals, including psychosis and other mental health problems (like depression, PTSD, and substance use). This class will help you learn tools to understand and overcome these challenges, while you move forward with your life and pursue your recovery goals. This group will be open to all young adult Veterans (including those not enrolled in the PRRC program). We will sometimes meet at various destinations in the community, as agreed upon by class members, to encourage social connection and community integration. Please join us!



### SEEKING SANCTUARY

This class focuses on (non-denominational) spiritual issues. Class is led by the VA chaplaincy.



### SKILLFUL EMOTIONS: PART I/II

Do you frequently experience overwhelming emotion? Do you go from great happiness to intense sadness to overwhelming anger without seeing clearly why? Do these unpredictable emotional changes affect your relationships? This class will cover these concepts and introduce coping skills and approaches to better manage our emotional life and relationships, using Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT). Group members will bring in examples related to their self-identified goals and problem behaviors, actively working to apply mindfulness, emotion regulation, interpersonal effectiveness, and distress tolerance skills more effectively in their own lives. Active participation in and outside of class will be essential to help group members feel more skillful, confident, and effective in managing emotions and cultivating healthy relationships.

**\*Both Parts I and Part II of this class will be required, to provide an opportunity to effectively apply the skills to specific situations in your own life.\***



### SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING

This class is based on a well-researched model of social skills training. The class provides an easy and fun way to learn about and practice expressive, receptive, and conversational skills involved in human relationships. The group focuses on training skills in the following areas: Conversation, Assertiveness, Conflict Management, Communal Living, Friendship and Dating, Health Maintenance, Work, and Coping Skills for Drug and Alcohol Use.



### SPEAKING OF SMOKING

Speaking of Smoking is a class designed to assist Veterans with tobacco cessation and reduction. The only requirement for class registration is a desire to make positive changes around your tobacco use. We use a VA-issued workbook which is quite useful and informative. Although we will progress through the workbook together as a class, the class is also designed to include hand-tailored interventions to match where each participant is at with their own process. There is no pressure to quit on any given date, only lots of support to help you reach *your own goals*. Since inception of the class, many Veterans have quit smoking, so please come join us and see what we can do together as a team!



### STORY CORPS

Writers of all levels are welcome to attend the Veterans Story Corps. In this class, veterans work individually on a variety of recovery-oriented writing exercises to increase self-awareness and reduce tension while also increasing language arts and communication skills. Veterans are offered an opportunity to explore prompts including journaling, expressive writing, poetry, non-fiction, playwriting, and short stories about real topics relevant to their current challenges or personal goals. Group members are invited to practice their storytelling skills and share their writing with peers to gain support and further reflection. Anyone—from beginner to expert—is welcome to come and try their hand at Story Corps!



### STRENGTH THROUGH SELF-COMPASSION

Are you really hard on yourself when you make a mistake or struggle in life? Do you beat yourself up when things don't go the way you'd hoped? Most of us feel compassion when a close friend is having a hard time. What would it be like to offer that same caring attention to yourself, especially when you are struggling? To have the strength to stand up to harm, including the harm that we cause to ourselves through self-criticism and self-judgment? Research shows that self-compassion is associated with lower levels of anxiety and depression, stronger coping with life challenges, emotional well-being, healthy habits like diet and exercise, and more satisfying personal relationships.

Participants in Strength through Self Compassion class will learn how to:

- Understand the benefits of self-compassion
- Practice self-compassion in daily life
- Motivate themselves with kindness rather than criticism
- Handle difficult emotions with greater ease
- Identify obstacles to self-compassion and strategies for overcoming them



### VETERANS COMMUNITY COUNCIL

The PRRC's Student Council exists to allow Veterans the opportunity to become "active participants" in the development and day-to-day operations of the program. This is an excellent opportunity to interact with other PRRC students and staff, aid in the development of new initiatives, and advocate for Veteran-centered care.



### WOMENS CREATE

Female veterans will be invited to discuss, share, visualize and actualize recovery goals through discussion of recovery concepts and through active creative expression. Class will encourage women to share aspirations and unique methods of creativity such as visual art, writing, and performing. Class will encourage mindfulness and support healthy social involvement through the discussion of shared interests of female veterans.



### WORK ZONE

Thinking about returning to work or volunteering? If you could use some great pointers on getting back into the work force, whether you are recently out of the job market or if it has been a while, come join us. This pre-employment workshop is designed to support your success. We will provide the basic tools for you to get started and to keep you motivated along the way. We will cover topics such as career exploration, interviewing skills, resume preparation, professional attire (for a variety of work settings), 'office' etiquette, communicating effectively with co-workers, etc.



### WRAP

This class is designed to guide you through the development of a Wellness Recovery Action Plan, or WRAP. This is a plan to help you in your mental health recovery, help you get well, stay well, and help you to create the life you want. This plan can also be useful when you are confronted with other stressful situations as well. You may not complete the entire plan in these sessions and that is OK. You will be encouraged to work on them at home or with other staff whom you feel comfortable with.