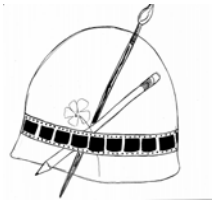
Winter 2016 PRRC Course Catalog

Acceptance and Committing to Life.

Be an active participant in your life! Learn how to be more present in your daily life as well as how to be more engaged in activities that are meaningful to you. This class teaches skills from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) to help you:

- **A**ccept your experience and be present in your life,
- **C**hoose the values that mean the most to you, and
- **T**ake 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.

CBT for Anxiety & 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.

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.

Creating Connections.

People who have social supports and companionship, and who participate in activities with others, generally report greater life satisfaction than those who do not. Additionally, current evidence shows that the physical health risks of social isolation and loneliness are comparable to other well-established risk factors such as obesity or lack of exercise. In Creating Connections class, Veterans will: 1. Learn about the benefits of social connections and how they are developed; 2. Conduct a self-assessment of their current social participation (including interests, strengths, skills, barriers, and resources); 3. Identify goals for social participation; 4. Make a plan to reach their goals; 5. Take action on the plan; 6. Review what went well, and what could be improved.

Dual Recovery.

This class focuses on alcohol and substance abuse recovery as it relates to mental health recovery. Class will discuss veterans' recovery process, and get feedback from one another. The basis of the class is that recovery is possible.

Ending Self Stigma.

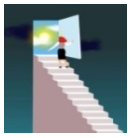
The goal of this class is to help individuals who are living with serious mental illness overcome internalized stigma, and move towards goals that important to them. The class is based on cognitive-behavioral therapy and recovery approaches, with an emphasis on the cultivation of the self "outside mental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

Ending Self Stigma: Seminar

This class was created for individuals who have taken the Ending Self Stigma class. The goal of this class is to support Veterans in taking the next step in overcoming internalized stigma. This class is largely student-driven so that the class topics are presented by students and facilitators and are of personal interest to students. Key topics include: stigma and stereotypes in society, disclosing to others/telling your story, and advocacy targeting stigma around mental illness.

Family Support.
Open to caregivers, family members, and significant others of consumers of mental health services. The class will provide a forum for education and discussion of various aspects of living with a person with severe mental illness: medications, side effects, symptomatology, and pathology

Happiness Boot Camp.
Happiness can be conditioned. While some people seem to be born eternal optimists, the rest of us have to work at it. Just as a recruit is molded into a Marine, Soldier, Airman, or Sailor during boot camp through physical and mental training, Veterans in the Happiness Boot Camp will learn about and practice the evidence-based exercises that have been shown to increase happiness and sustain it. Like any boot camp, Happiness Boot Camp requires focus and may feel like hard work, at least in the beginning. For those who are up to the challenge, the end result will be the development of a personalized emotional fitness routine that can be used to provide lasting happiness.



Heart of Recovery.
Are you ready to recover? This class will explore your readiness to recover while helping to prepare you for the development of meaningful recovery plans that will allow you to design and build a life of your choosing.

Let's Talk about Sex and Dating.
Sexuality is an important aspect of one's overall physical, psychological, social, and spiritual wellbeing, but talking about sexuality and sexual health can be difficult. Students in Let's Talk About Sex and Dating will: 1. Be provided with accurate information about sexuality and sexual health; 2. Explore personal and societal values, feelings, and attitudes related to sexuality and sexual health; 3. Learn and practice skills for building safe, supportive, and satisfying intimate and sexual relationships. 4. Explore community resources related to sexuality and sexual health.

Instruction will be provided in a safe and respectful environment, inclusive of Veterans of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

Man in Society.
Man in Society is a group for men exploring life from a deep sense of core values, committed to developing a fuller sense of purpose in life particularly in modern society.

Music Project.

The music support group is a recovery-oriented group with a focus on enhanced community integration. This is not a "get together and jam" type of group. Interested individuals meet individually with the group facilitator prior to the start of the group to answer questions and discuss individual goals for the group based on one's recovery plan. Weekly material and content is driven based on group need and goals. Weekly groups will consist of topics such as, but are not limited to the following: developing one's "musical ear," basic blues structures, the role of the drummer and bass player, the group performing "cover songs," playing music as a group in the park, and/or creating and performing originals. The class focuses on the further development of interpersonal skills, team-work, compromise and negation skills, and stress management to name a few.

Music Toolbox.

This class will empower Veterans using music as a wellness tool, incorporating Metacognitive Therapy within a Recovery Model. Veterans will learn to more effectively incorporate their experiences around music and share these with others in the class setting. The class will emphasize that focusing on and sharing music, music experiences, and memories associated with music can elevate one's mood and build comradery, and it will encourage Veterans to continue these experiences in the community.

Nutrition & Exercise for Wellness and Recovery.

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.

Outsider Art!

This creative arts therapy field trip class meets on Fridays at 9am at Fort Miley. We begin each class with brief mindfulness training and planning a trip together, then head outside into the fresh air to engage in recovery-oriented art making from 10am-noon. Staff will provide individual and group support to learn about mindful drawing, sculpting, photography, painting beautiful places in SF, visiting museums, being in Nature and creative ways to feel better. No previous art experience is required.

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.

Psychosis Support.

This is a support group for people who hear or see things that are not there, or have fears about things that are not true. The group shares tips on coping with these experiences, and discusses other topics of mutual interest such as relationships with loved ones.

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 is based on cognitive behavioral therapy, or CBT, and will introduce coping strategies for managing psychosis and other mental health problems (like depression, PTSD, and substance use). Psychosis can include stressful experiences like hearing voices, feeling suspicious or paranoid, having unusual, distressing thoughts, feeling confused or disorganized, lacking motivation, and having difficulty connecting with yourself or other people. 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); please join us!

Seeking Sanctuary.

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

Skillful Emotions: Parts 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.

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!

Techniques in Role Recovery.

This course provides foundational material related to role recovery. There is an emphasis on ideas related to recovery of roles based on self-chosen goals, techniques learned across classes are related to the WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan), and discussion of DVDs presenting consumers who have achieved role recovery is fundamental. Also, various techniques (such as behavioral approaches to managing auditory hallucinations) are included. Role recovery rather than symptom reduction is an important emphasis.

Think SMART.

Do you have trouble paying attention or concentrating? Planning and organizing? Learning and remembering new information?
This class will focus on improving cognitive skills (thinking abilities) like concentration, attention, memory, planning, organization, and problem-solving. Each session, students will practice skills to improve these areas and

learn new ways of "working around" cognitive difficulties. Improving these abilities may help you to perform better in everyday activities and reach your goals.

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.

Wellness Management.

This class will provide knowledge on recovery strategies including practical facts about mental illness, how to build social supports, use medications effectively, cope with stress, problems and symptoms and get your needs met in the mental health system. Each class will build on the previous one, giving you the opportunity to enhance your knowledge each week while working on organizational and time management skills.

Women 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.