



Temple University

Collaborative

On Community Inclusion of Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities



Welcoming Places Calendar

Why are Welcoming Places Important?

Did you know that participating in your community (having a job, being a student, or even going to the park) is healthy and promotes mental health recovery? People with mental illnesses may be more likely to participate in places where they feel welcomed for who they are, whether or not others in the place are aware of their mental health diagnosis. Have you ever thought about what makes you feel welcome in the places where you spend time? It turns out there's a lot to consider! There are physical features, like furniture and decorations; sensory features like light and noise level; and activity features, like playing a game of softball or reading in a library. There are also social features to places in the community—other people who visit a place can also make us feel welcome or unwelcome there. Knowing what features you find personally welcoming can help you identify your own community participation goals!

The Study

Our Welcoming Places research study stems from the belief that welcoming communities provide opportunities for meaningful community participation of individuals with mental illnesses. We conducted interviews with a total of 90 participants who had a mental illness and were able to identify a welcoming place in the community that was not affiliated with mental health services. Participants in our study identified a variety of places that they felt welcomed in, such as libraries, parks, coffee shops, and churches. Each of these places contained specific features that participants found welcoming; the quiet environment of a library; the open space and natural light of a park; the social connections forged in a church or the corner store; the opportunity to engage in a meaningful activity, like fixing a bike or reading a poem aloud in a writing workshop.

Our Calendar

The purpose of our 2020 calendar is not only to welcome a new decade, but to help guide you in identifying what places in the community *you* find welcoming! Each month features a quote from a participant about their welcoming place, as well as a monthly goal. You can also check out our recently released Welcoming Places document (access it [here](#)) which contains worksheets that can help you identify your welcoming environmental features and support you in reaching and maintaining your community participation goals! Participant quotes have been edited for clarity and brevity, and names have been changed to protect confidentiality.

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The Temple University Collaborative recently conducted a study in which participants identified and described a community location where they felt welcomed as a person with a mental illness. We believe that welcoming places are important for encouraging sustained participation in the community. This calendar features descriptions of welcoming places and challenges you to set goals and engage in your welcoming place!

Suggested Citation:

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January

2020

Welcoming Place: The YMCA

"The YMCA is awesome. We don't just have star athletes, there's a lot of us between the ages of 50 and 60, and everyone supports everyone else."



Monthly goal:

If you're making fitness resolutions this January, try including other people in your goals. Having a gym buddy or joining an exercise class are great ways to develop friendships while staying healthy!



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Welcoming Place: theater

"What I like the most is the jazz sessions - everybody is on the same page enjoying the relaxing music; I feel like I belong there, you know, I feel comfortable with the people, they're friendly and warm."

Monthly goal:

Is there a cultural group in your community that you've been wanting to learn more about? Going to a theater or lecture is a great way to connect with these groups! Look around at what's happening in your community and make a commitment to attend this month!



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Welcoming Place: support group

"I choose if I want to go there. It's like a place where I go to talk about anything and what I'm going through. You know, if I need some help."



Monthly Goal: Even if you don't belong to a support group, there are many ways to offer and receive support! This month, make a goal to support a friend or family member.



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Welcoming Place: "bike church"

"I really get along with everybody and I've been fixing bikes my whole life, since I was like two or three years old, so I enjoy it. It keeps me occupied and I really enjoy doing it."

Monthly Goal:

Activities you enjoy provide an opportunity to meet people with similar interests. Think about something you love to do- it could be taking a yoga class, visiting a museum, or going to an open mic night- and make a plan to make it happen this month!



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May

2020

Welcoming Place: the park

“Being outside is good for anybody’s mental health. It clears your mind and gets you focused.”

Monthly Goal:

Make time this month to get outside! If you can, explore a park or green space near you, or even just take a walk through your neighborhood!



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Welcoming Place: the zoo

"I love to spend time at the zoo - it's just me and the cheetahs, me and the tigers. Even though it's just me and the animals, I feel included when I talk to people there, all the other people at the zoo."

Monthly Goal:

There are some places we go alone but still feel part of a bigger group - like the zoo! Where do you go when you want to be alone, but near others? Make it a goal to visit this month.



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Welcoming Place: the park
 “What Penn’s Landing means to me is it makes me feel good, it helps me clear my mind, relax my brain, and gives me beautiful thoughts. When I am there, I feel really good - no pain or stress - I feel free, like a whole new different person.”



Monthly Goal: Find a place in your community to clear your mind and recharge. Set aside time this month to reflect on where you feel at peace.



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Welcoming Place: movie theater

“At the movie theater, everyone’s in a good mood, everyone’s laughing and excited to see the movie. You can’t wait for the movie to start, but while you’re waiting you can chitchat with people you’ve never met before. The great people and fun atmosphere keep me coming back”

Monthly Goal:

Where do you go to have fun? Try visiting your most uplifting place if you’re feeling down this month.

Not feeling down?
Go just because!



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September

2020

Welcoming Place: the public library

"I feel welcome at the library because it's a safe haven place that I can go and be at peace with myself. Sometimes I go there for entertainment, or to talk to people or stuff like that. But even though some people don't talk, I feel welcome there."



Monthly Goal:

Do you have a place in your life that is both welcoming and enriching? Make a goal to visit a place this month, like a museum or library, where you can both enjoy yourself and learn!



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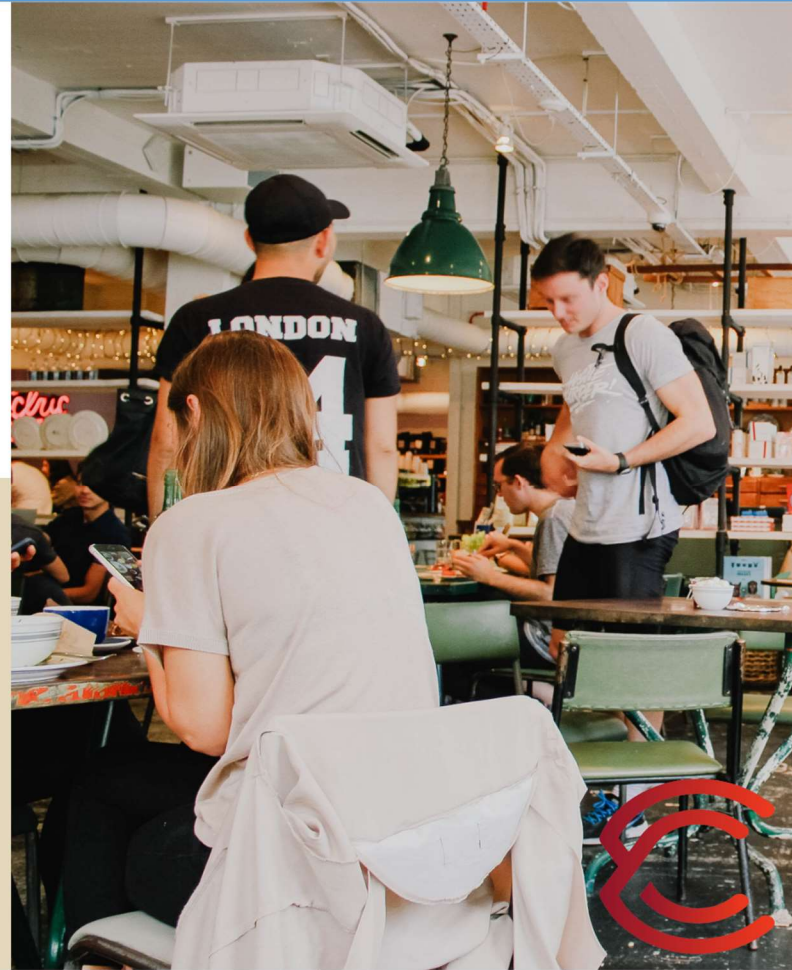
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Welcoming Place: poet's café

"At the poet's café, it's a no-judgement zone - everyone is inviting and warm and encouraging. People there care about me, and help keep me positive."

Monthly Goal:

Where is your judgement-free zone? Is it a poet's cafe, library, or friend's house? This month, make it a goal to visit - enjoy being in that positive space!



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Welcoming Place: local store

"A lot of people that frequent the store also have mental illnesses so I would feel very comfortable if they knew I had a mental illness too, because we are all in the same boat."



Monthly Goal: Where is a place that you feel accepted by the people around you? Aim to explore that place this month and reflect on why you feel welcomed there.



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Welcoming Place: religious community

"When I go to church and I'm around church family, it makes me feel like I want to live. It makes me feel like I belong."

Monthly Goal:

What places in your life give you a feeling of community and comfort? Make the time to visit the uplifting communities in your life this month.



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