



Please, tell us about yourself?

I was born and raised in East London. I grew up with my parents, who had both moved here from Ireland, and my younger brother.

What education course did you follow? Where did life take you after this?

I usually tell people that I have been to the school of hard knocks and the University of Life. Because my early experiences were so difficult, my education suffered a lot, and I left school at 16 with few formal qualifications. Much of my knowledge and

experience comes from my own experiences of surviving extreme adversity combined with all that I have learned from other survivors. Despite my lack of formal education I have taught at many universities around the world and hold honorary positions at a number of universities. I am glad that there is increasing recognition about the different ways that people can gain knowledge and expertise beyond traditional methods.



Would you like to share about how you got involved in mental health?

I got involved in mental health after my own, very unhelpful experiences in mental health services, following the birth of my first daughter. I had struggled for a long time with the consequences of my early experiences and my daughter's birth, finally liberated me to start talking about what had happened to me as a child. Unfortunately, the services that I entered saw my experiences as a symptom of an illness and not a natural and understandable response to the awful experiences which I had endured as a child. I felt deeply unhappy that mental health services were unable to respond to my distress in a more helpful way, but in actuality, made matters much worse for me. This felt like an insult to injury and yet another indignity and injustice, to endure. I felt determined that when I was able, I would work with others to improve mental health services. I first became involved with the Hearing Voices Network more than 12 years ago and it was one of the best decisions I ever made. Being part of a worldwide movement which is demanding more humane responses to experiences that traditionally have been treated as symptoms of mental illness, has been incredibly liberating, affirming and empowering for me.



What projects are you currently working on?

I am currently working on a number of projects including a 2nd edition of the book Demedicalising Misery, several papers and articles, a joint project with a number of critical colleagues looking at creating an alternative to the DSM and later this year I will also start work on a book about complex trauma. Sure there is some other stuff too!

You have an interesting list of publications, please could tell us more about this?

I have published a number of papers, articles and co-edited books on the subjects of hearing voices, psychosis, trauma, abuse, and critiquing traditional approaches to madness and distress.

Do you have any 'coping strategies' that you use?

I have a number of coping strategies that I use to take good care of myself. Having open, compassionate communication with all of my voices and attending to my emotions, is the primary way I take good care of myself and maintain a sense of internal equilibrium. Mindfulness mediation has been a real life saver for me, helping me to feel less frazzled and more grounded in my life. I try to swim regularly, practice Pilates and have regular massage. I work very hard and have a lot of responsibility in my life as a working mother, Chair of a national charity and freelance mental health writer and consultant, so it's really important that I keep a good balance in my life with plenty of time for rest and play alongside all of the work that I do – I have found that all work and no play makes Jac a dull girl!. I have a rule that I don't work at weekends, I take a long holiday in the summer and winter and I have lots of interests outside of mental health and activism. Although I take life seriously – there is so much that needs to change! – I also love laughing and being silly and try to have as much fun as possible. I have some wonderful friends and enjoy spending time with people that I love, especially my children.

What has been the personal highlight(s) of your career in mental health?

I have been fortunate to travel all over the world and meet some wonderful people in the course of my work and have many happy memories. One of the absolute highlights was in 2010 when I went on a mini tour of New Zealand and Australia and took my youngest daughter with me. I spoke at a number of conferences, appeared on national radio and we stayed in some really swanky places. It was a important time for us as we were able to talk about some really important issues about my life and work and she got to see me in action and we also had a lot of fun together. I gave a keynote talk at a huge event in Wellington attended by over 400



people from across Australasia and people were so moved by my presentation that immediately after I finished speaking someone stood up and spontaneously began singing a ***Waiata – a traditional Maori song*** - to express his strong emotions about my talk, and then the whole auditorium stood up and sang with him. To have 400 people rise and sing such a beautiful and moving song in response to my testimony was such a powerful experience. I just stood on the stage and let their voices wash over me with tears streaming down my face and a huge smile on my face. Magical.

What do you have lined up for 2013?

To continue to work with others to change the world and to have as much fun as possible whilst doing so.

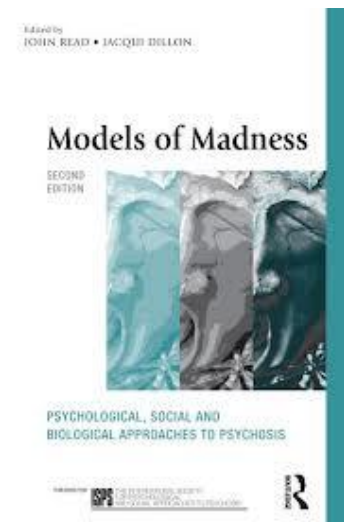
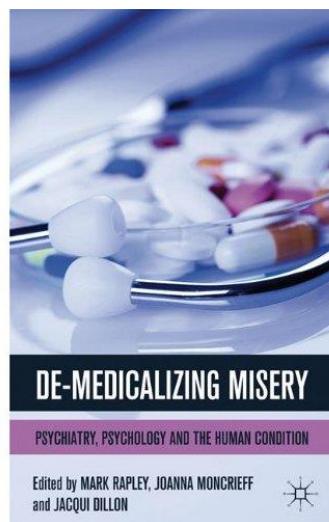
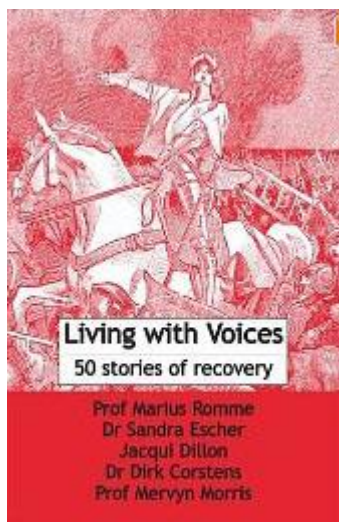
And after that, what does the future hold for you?

I hope to write a book about my life and work when I find a spare moment.

Favourite Quote?

"...Living well is the best revenge..."

You can catch all this and more of Jacqui Dillon at: <http://www.jacquidillon.org/>



Hearing Voices Movement: Jacqui Dillon - <https://youtu.be/eSUNEa1CKn8>

What is it like to hear voices? How do people learn to live with their voices, and are voices sometimes positive and helpful? What is the connection between voices and trauma?



PsyCope 'Coping with Psychosis'
Feature of the Month – June 2013
Jacqui Dillon

Jacqui Dillon, voice hearer and director of the UK Hearing Voices Network, discusses how the movement of people who hear voices is creating self-help alternatives to traditional and often abusive mental health care.

<http://www.intervoiceonline.org>

Madness Radio - voices and visions from outside mental health

<https://www.madnessradio.net/>