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4 Powerful Stories of Transformation

From Addiction to Agents of Change

by Olivia Pennelle

Recovery is one of the most painful yet transformative processes a person can go through. More often than not, the depths of despair is our catalyst for change: when the weight of being is more painful than the prospect of becoming.

Like Rumi says, it is from the bough of our hearts that we find the joy of recovery. But that process requires shedding our rotten roots, learning how to live in our bodies and learning how to weather life's storms, so that we can live fully. Recovery isn't just about not using drugs and alcohol — it's about learning how to thrive so much that using drugs is unappealing.

Sharing stories of recovery gives us a sense of hope. They inspire us, showing us that not only is it possible for us to change, but that we can go on to live a life of meaning and of purpose.

We have featured four incredible people who embody everything it means to become an agent of change. From the depths of addiction — featuring methamphetamines, crack cocaine, alcohol, felony charges and prison sentences — these stories of transformation come from people who have not only recovered, but who have gone on to help other people in recovery lead their best lives and shape the way the nation deals with substance use disorder.

1. JANIE GULLICKSON

Recently featured in *Now This* video,

Goodwill and Janie Gullickson Are Helping Women Rebuild Their Lives After Jail, Janie shared her powerful story. Once addicted to methamphetamine, Janie's substance use disorder spanned a couple of decades. Drugs were everything to her — the way she functioned and her means of getting through the day. Eventually, her addiction became a very public struggle impacting all areas of her life, including her mental health. "I was the mother of five children, a teenage mom," Janie says. "I tried to function, and then eventually I became more of that stereotypical image that folks may have of an IV user on the streets."

Janie has been convicted of more than 12 felonies. She spent five years in and out of county jails before serving two years in prison. It was there she was given a second chance. Janie enrolled in the job readiness program run by Goodwill. The program helped her get back on her feet, but more than that, it changed her life. Today, Janie is now the executive director of the Mental Health and Addiction Association of Oregon (MHAAO), a peer-led organization that is committed to promoting self-directed recovery and wellness for all individuals.

"At MHAAO, we believe that all individuals who experience mental health and/or addiction challenges can recover and that recovery, its journey and process, is unique to the individual," Janie says. "We honor lived experiences. We support people wherever they are on their journey, free from judgment, or agenda. We support these aims through education, advocacy, recovery, peer services, training, technical assistance, community collaboration, and through developing peer workforce and leadership."

POWERFUL STORIES to pg 6

Being Our Brother's Keeper A Road to Hope

by John Driggs

These days many of us are having a hard time finding hope. Some of us are overwhelmed by serious personal problems. Others of us live with a foreboding sense of an uncertain future for ourselves and our children. Looming climate change, increasing inequity between rich and poor, and massive dysfunction in our government all add an eerie shakiness to our lives as if we were in the middle of an earthquake.

For safety's sake we don't know what ground to stand upon. Adding to our gloominess is the increasing ennui and detachment of modern living where friendships are only experienced at best on-line and people don't have enough face-to-face real-life human interactions.

Since real life attachments are the most important human need, it's no wonder that many of us overdose on drugs or contemplate suicide. There is more than enough doom and gloom to go around. Nevertheless, I am here to tell you that there is even more abundant hope to go around and no reason to call it quits.

Allow me to share a story of hope from my own life that illustrates what I mean. It is a story that any of us can have. If we keep our hearts open and eyes alert any of us may have such an experience — in fact, you've probably have already had one. Here's my tale:

BROTHER'S KEEPER to pg 10



CALENDAR

UPCOMING
Spirituality for the Second Half of Life - A Retreat for Ages 55 Plus: January 25-27, check-in 4:00-5:30 pm and check-out at 1:00 pm Sunday at The McIver Center at The Retreat, 1351 Wayzata Boulevard East, Wayzata. A Weekend Retreat with Dede Armstrong and Friends. Based on Richard Rohr's book, "*Falling Upward*", we will spend a weekend looking at how we can embrace this next stage of our lives, and the special spirituality that comes with it. Registration is \$220 per person which includes lodging, food, materials and a copy of Rohr's book. Scholarship funds are available. Register at www.theretreat.org or call 952-476-0566.

2019 ACA Annual Birthday Party: MNACA is hosting their 3rd annual birthday party on Saturday, January 26 at Berea Lutheran Church, 7538 Emerson Ave S, Richfield. 3:00 to 5:00 pm This is an Open Speaker meeting event. Friends and family welcome. Coffee, apple cider, and cake will be served. Please bring an appetizer to share. This event is free.

Workshop - Life on Life's Terms: Saturday, February 2, Noon-12:45 pm (lunch provided), 1:00-4:00 pm (Workshop), at Crown Point Church, 7121 Bloomington Ave S, Richfield. Happy Destiny sponsors this workshop. There is no cost to attend.

Narcan Training: Sunday, February 10 at 9:45-10:45 am at Mayflower Community Congregational Church UCC, 106 E. Diamond Lake Rd, Minneapolis.

Volleyball Night: Join Sober Corps on the Fourth Sunday of each month for Volleyball Night. 4:00-6:00 pm at the Malik Sealy Gym Of Dreams at Gethsemane Church in Downtown Minneapolis. This event is Free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be served. For more information contact us at info@sobercorps.org or call Alan at (952) 212-1623.

A Comedy Show: Saturday, March 9 from 6:00-10:00 pm at Recovery Church, 253 State Street, St. Paul. Event will include door prizes, foods, professional comedian, and "open mic" comedy competition. This is a Narcotics Anonymous sponsored event. \$15/person before March 1, \$20 after. Contact Sam B. at 612-298-1225 for more information.

ONGOING
Morningside After Dark Series: Last Monday of the month during winter from 7:30-9:00 pm at Edina Morningside Community Church. It's a free event and coffee bar, with donations appreciated to help cover costs. Doors open at 7 pm for best seating. For more info visit: www.dissomance.website/events/.

January 28 - "Changing Lanes"
February 25 - "Fight or Flight"
April 29 - "Grace"

Mothers of Adult Children: A support group for people whose moms used violence. Our support group will offer a safe place to talk, listen and share feelings, experiences and stories with other moms in a comfortable, confidential environment. We meet 1st Saturday of every month,

9:00-11:00am. Breakfast provided at Calvary Baptist Church — Maki Room, 1st floor, 2608 Blaisdell Ave S., Minneapolis. Parking available on street or back lot. Call 534-349-9105 for more information.

The Dan Anderson Renewal Center, Hazelden, Center City, MN. 12-Step-inspired weekend retreats focus on common issues faced in recovery: forgiveness, spirituality, healthy relationships, grief, and loss. Call 1-800-262-4882 for more info.

All Recovery Meetings: Minnesota Recovery Connection is hosting All Recovery meetings throughout the Twin Cities. These meetings honor all pathways to recovery, acknowledging that each person's path is unique. Come, socialize, share - friends and family members welcome. Call 612-584-4158 for more info or go to www.minnesotarecovery.org.

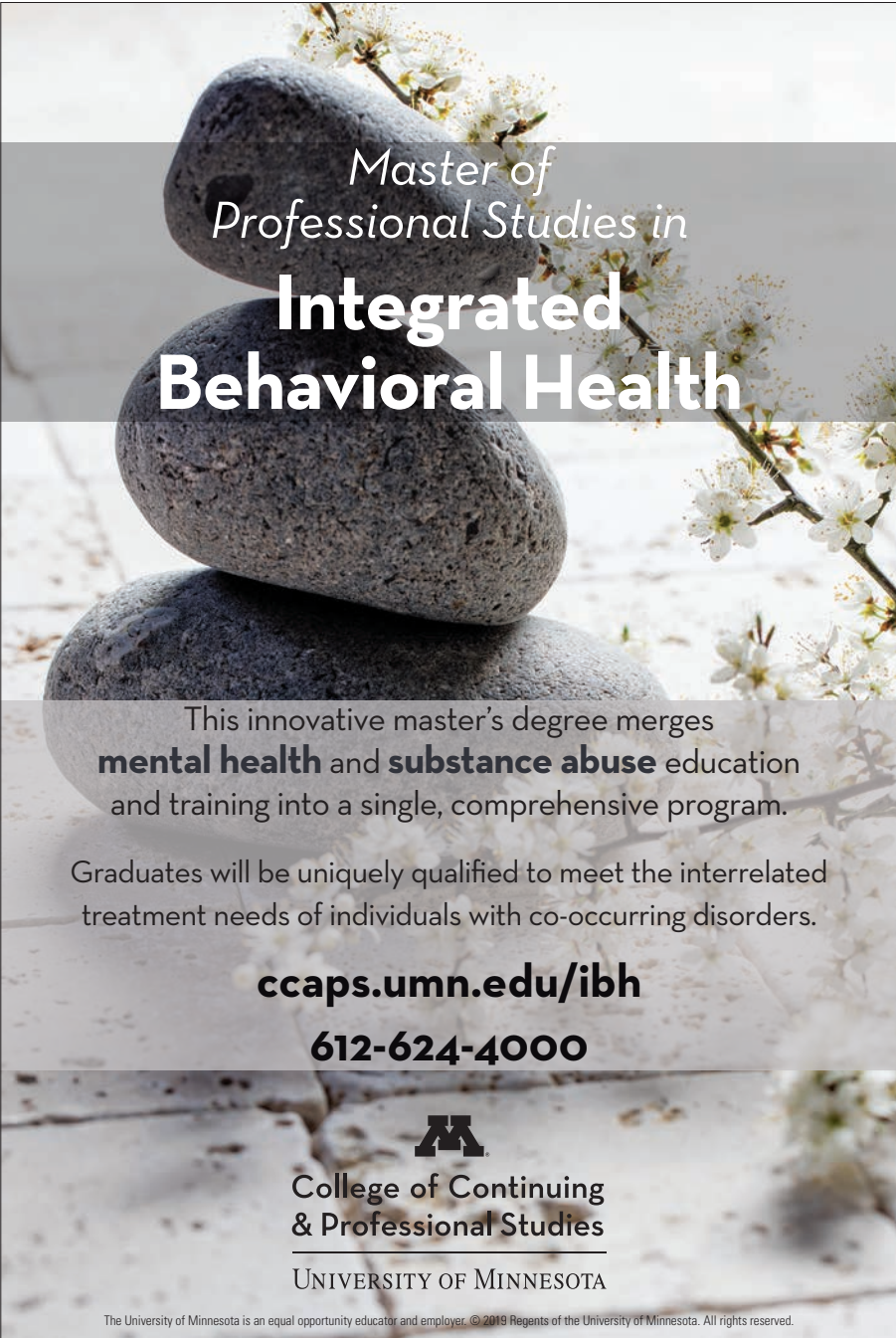
Women's 12-Step Program: Wednesdays at 7 pm, Peace Presbyterian Church, 7624 Cedar Lake Rd, St Louis Park. For women of all ages who find any part of life chaotic or out of control. The chaos can be caused by addiction, eating disorders, relationship problems or self esteem issues. We use *A Woman's Way through the Twelve Steps* by Stephanie Covington. Peace Presbyterian Church has a community dinner at 6pm on Wednesdays and we provide free childcare for 12-Step participants. Reclamation-Ministries.org or call 612-879-9642.

Hazelden's Second Sunday Retreats: The second Sunday of each month everyone in recovery is invited to Hazelden in Center City, MN (Cork Center) for an inspirational day of workshops, fellowship, sharing and fun. Open to anyone 18 or older involved in a 12-Step program. \$15 if you register online, \$20 (in-person) includes a buffet lunch and information packet.

9 am - Register at the Cork Center
9 am - Introductions and orientation
10-11 am - Lecture
10:30 -12:45 - Small group discussions
12:45 - 1:30 pm - Sunday buffet
1:45 pm - Small group discussions or Meditation group
2:55 pm - Relaxation group
800-257-7810; Plymouth alum welcome.

The Recovery Church: 253 State St., St. Paul, 55107, offers worship services on Sunday at 9:30 am with fellowship, coffee and snacks following service. The mission is to provide a spiritual community for people in search of growth, healing, and recovery. For a list of recovery meetings, visit therecoverychurch.org or like [therecoverychurchstpaul](https://www.facebook.com/recoverychurchstpaul) on Facebook.

To place a listing, email David at david@thephoenixspirit.com or call 612.298.5405.




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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Ramblings on Hope

by Julia Edelman, Editor

Not my typical morning ruminations, but this morning I woke up wondering about people in cars in ditches. Here's the context: I'm on a trans-continental road trip with my 22-year-old son, destination Los Angeles. We opted for the southern route versus the Rockies to avoid Bad Winter Weather, and somewhere around Faribault, MN we encountered a raging snowstorm that blew us all the way to Enid, Oklahoma, 11 hours later. People plan, God laughs.

As we passed car after spun-out car in the ditch, I felt myself becoming increasingly uncomfortable. Some people had clearly been rescued from their now abandoned cars. Others were fresh spin-outs, dignified by telltale tire tracks that careened off the road and led to a vehicle with emergency lights flashing and presumably a person in distress inside.

"I hope they're ok," I repeated to my son as we passed the first few cars. This phrase was soon replaced with, "Do you think we should pull over?" Given the dangerous conditions, we decided not to stop and thus perhaps imperil ourselves as well.

And yet, I'm haunted by the action of our non-action. The hope that I held for the well-being of those stranded in ditches felt thin, thus my discomfort. At the time, however, that hope, along with prayer, was all I had to give.

Hope starts early in life. We find it first in childhood dreams and fancies. "What do you want to be when you grow up?" we are asked as kids. I want to be a doctor. I hope to explore the bottom of the ocean. I hope I can fly to the moon. Lofty and magical ambitions are part and parcel of the imagi-

nation of youth. And how important they are, for without these hopes and dreams, they may never be realized.

These are first layer hopes. The wishes of childhood are fanciful and not yet tethered to reality. Second layer hopes run deeper. They may be aspirations more grounded in reality than those of our childhood. "I hope I/she/he gets into graduate school," or "I hope find a loving partner and have a family some day." For an elderly or sick person our mantra becomes, "We hope she isn't in much pain." Then there's the universal hope. The hope for our planet and all of its creatures. The hope for world peace.

How do we measure hope? Is it quantifiable? For instance, how much hope is in the eyes of the man who stands at the corner near St. Mary's Basilica holding a cardboard sign reading, "Anything Helps. Vietnam Vet. God Bless." How do we measure the spark that is still there, that got him to the street corner earlier that day, to claim his turf? What amount of hope propelled him there? How many people must reach into their hearts and wallets and say, "Why would I not give?" to keep his spark alive? Hope does indeed spring eternal.

Sometimes, in recovery, our hopes are best deferred. Our plans for the future might suffer some collateral damage, and we need to put our vision for the future on hold until we are on solid sober ground. Relationships. College. Kids.

Our wish for our readers from *The Phoenix Spirit* is that you find some nuggets of hope and inspiration in this issue. We are forever grateful to our readers, advertisers, and writers, that we can continue to carry the message.



the **Phoenix Spirit**

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*Every trial, every demon, every
issue we find and face holds within
it the seeds of
healing, health, wisdom,
growth and prosperity.
We hope you find a
seed in every issue.*

THE PHOENIX NEWSPAPER is a bi-monthly publication for people actively working on their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being. We are committed to providing articles, advertising, and information about recovery, renewal, and personal growth to help people experience life in a balanced, meaningful way.

The opinions and facts presented in this publication are intended to be diverse and represent those of the writers and/or contributors, and are not necessarily those of THE PHOENIX SPIRIT. We seek writers and interview subjects who are willing to gift you with their honestly held convictions and insights. We seek to attract advertisers who offer products and services of integrity. But we urge our readers to research, and trust their instincts.

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Can't find the paper near your house or apartment? Write to us and we'll do our best to get THE PHOENIX SPIRIT to a drop-off site near you.

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MONDAYS

Conscious Contact – 11th Step Meeting and meditative Drum Circle. Mondays (except holidays) 12:30-1:30pm. Transfiguration Lutheran Church. 11000 France Ave S, Bloomington. Drums provided. No experience necessary. Arthur 952-884-2364.

Mindfulness and the 12 Steps at Clouds In Water Zen Center, St. Paul. Near University and Western – 445 Farrington Street, St. Paul, MN 55103. Mondays, 7-8:15pm. Meditation and one step/month. Ongoing.

1900 Mens Alanon, Monday 5:45-7:15pm, 12-Step meeting, step presentation and small groups, fellowship. 1900 Nicollet Ave., Plymouth Congregational Church. Tom W., 612-281-5230. Enter at parking lot.

Overeaters Anonymous: Monday mornings, 10-11am. 3rd floor, handicapped accessible. Minnehaha United Methodist Church, 3701 50th St Mpls 55407. For more info call Ana 651-592-7510

Understanding Eating Disorders, Treatment, and Recovery: Second Monday of each month, 6-8:30 pm The Emily Program staff provides answers to common questions and concerns of families and friends “new” to eating disorders, treatment and recovery. 2265 Como Ave, St. Paul, 55108. Free, drop in. Visit www.emilyprogram.com or call 651.645.5323.

Eating Disorders Anonymous: second and fourth Monday of every month, 6:7:30pm in Little Falls at St Gabriel Hospital in the Rose Room, 3rd. St. entrance. JoAnn at 320.232.9576, or edalittlefalls@hotmail.com

Friends and Families of Suicide: a place of support and comfort where those that have lost a loved one to suicide will be comfortable talking about their own loss as well as hearing about the losses of others. Meets the 3rd Monday of every month 7-9pm, Twin Cities Friends Meeting, 1725 Grand Ave., St Paul, 55105. For info email fiosmn@yahoo.com or call Tracy @ 651.587.8006.

Debtors Anonymous: a group of men and women who use the 12-Step program to solve problems with debt and other money issues.; www.daminnesota.org 952-953-8438. Monday, 7-8:30 pm, St. Mary’s Greek Orthodox Church, 3450 Irving Ave. S., Mpls, 55408. (from the south parking lot use the door next to the flag)

Bloomington Codependents Anonymous: 7 pm, men & women at Unity South Church, corner of 1st Ave. and American Blvd. For more info go to: www.unitysouth.org/calendar or call 952.469.3303

Support group for married and divorced fathers. Parenting, partnering, and anger management issues. Mondays, 7 to 9 pm in Hopkins. Call Kip 763.783.4938.

Eating Disorders Anonymous: St. Paul, MN, Mondays @ 6:45:7:30 PM at Hamline Midway Library, 1558 W. Minnehaha Ave., St. Paul, MN 55104. Venita Johnson 612.964.2387 or eda.diverse@gmail.com for more information.

TUESDAYS

Recovering Couples Anonymous, 7pm. We are a 12 Step Group for couples wanting to find new ways to communicate. We provide strong couple support and model healthy couple-ship. Unity Church, 733 Portland Ave, St Paul, 55104. Enter the building through the parking lot door and take the elevator to the basement. Please check us out! Contact Dave at 651-214-5747 or Connie at 651-307-7964 for more information.

Families Anonymous (FA): First and third Tuesday evening of each month, 7pm. Support group for families and friends of those dealing with drug, alcohol or other behavioral issues. Is someone you love destroying family harmony by using drugs or alcohol? Free help exists! Join us at St. Timothy Lutheran Church: 1465 N. Victoria Street, St. Paul, MN 55117, or contact Dave E: 612-701-5575.

Debtors Anonymous: a group of men and women who use the 12-Step program to solve problems with debt and other money issues.; www.daminnesota.org 952-953-8438. Tues, 7-8 pm, Dayton Ave. Presbyterian Church, 217 Mackubin St., St. Paul, 55102. (1 block n. of Selby and 2 blocks e. of Dale. Meets in the parlor.

Recovery International Meeting at Mary Mother of the Church, 3333 Cliff Road, Burnsville, rm 9 at 3pm. It is a proven self help method to deal with mental illness including depression, anxiety, anger, mood disorders and fears using cognitive behavior therapy. Contact Rita at 952-890-7623.

Emotions Anonymous - For those dealing with emotional stress, depression, etc. 7:30pm at Christ the King Lutheran Church, Room 106, 8600 Fremont Ave., Bloomington. Take Penn Ave. south to 86th. Turn left and go to Fremont, just east of 35W. Brian at 952-888-6029.

Nicotine Anonymous: 7-8pm at St. Columbia Church/School, 1330 Blair Ave., St. Paul, 55104. For more info call 952-404-1488.

Overeaters Anonymous Roseville: Meetings are held from 9:45 – 10:45 am at St. Christopher’s Episcopal Church, 2300 N. Hamline Ave., Roseville, Room 218 Call Janie 651.639.4246 for more info.

A.C.A., 5:30-7 pm, Dakota Alano House, 3920 Rahn Rd, Eagan (Hwy 13 & Cedarvale Shop Ctr). 651.452.2921.www.dasinc.org/

A.C.A. 7pm, Saint Michael’s Lutheran Church 1660 W City Rd B (at Fry). Roseville. Open to all. Step and Traditions meeting.

Get a Fresh Start! 12-Step AA group, open meeting Tues., 7pm, at Kingswill Church, 1264 109th Ave NE, Blaine. Denny, 763.757.6512.

Eating Disorders Anonymous: 6:30-7:30pm, Zimmerman Evangelical Church, 25620 4th St. W, Zimmerman, 55398. Jodi A.: 763.244.6803 or eda.zimmerman@gmail.com for more info.

WEDNESDAYS

Al-Anon Evening Meditation Meeting, 7-8 pm., Pentagon Office Park, 4570 West 77th St., Suite 255, Edina, MN 55435.

Women’s 12-Step Program: 7pm, Peace Presbyterian Church, 7624 Cedar Lake Road, St Louis Park. For women of all ages who find any part of life chaotic or out of control. Through reading *A Woman’s Way through the Twelve Steps* by Stephanie S. Covington, members explore how the Steps help us overcome addictions and work to heal ourselves. Peace Presbyterian Church has a community dinner at 6pm on Wednesdays and provides free supervised childcare for 12-Step participants. Reclamation-Ministries.org, 612-879-9642

Eating Disorders Family & Friends Support Group: Open to the public, 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month, 5:45 pm – 7:15 pm at The Emily Program, 2265 Como Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55108.

Overeaters Anonymous: St. Paul Midway: Wednesdays 7–8 PM, Hamline United Methodist Church. Two blocks east of Snelling & Minnehaha. Park in south parking lot, use south entrance to education building. Press buzzer. For more info contact Susan at 651.295.7854.

Adult Children of Alcoholics: Wednesdays @ 7 pm. St. Mary’s Episcopal Church, 1895 Laurel Ave, St. Paul. Meets downstairs, sign in the lobby. For more information call Mary at 612.747.0709.

Transitions: 7:30.9:30pm Support to men and women who are transitioning from incarceration to living in the community. Trained facilitators and peers provide emotional support in a safe, openly honest environment to discuss discouragements, frustrations, temptations. One of the trained facilitators is a woman. The Men’s Center, 3249 Hennepin Ave. S. Minneapolis, 612.822.5892. tcm@freenet.msp.mn.us

Women’s CoDA Group: Women’s Only Codependents Anonymous Group. Meets every Wednesday at noon at Colonial Church of Edina, 6200 Colonial Way (Fireside room, S. end of bldg). For more information, call Valerie at 612.741.5281

Workaholics Anonymous: for people who are chronically preoccupied with work. Meets every Wed. 12–1pm in the east bldg at Fairview Riverside Hospital, 2450 Riverside Ave. Mpls. Take elevator inside main hospital entrance to level B, follow signs to east building and dining room E. 763-560-5199.

Marijuana Anonymous, Bloomington, 6-7 pm, Minnesota Valley Unitarian Universalist Church 10715 Zenith Ave S. (2 Blocks south of Old Shakopee Rd, on the East side of Zenith) Contact: bloomingtonma@hotmail.com

AA Meeting: 6:30 – 8:30pm St. Christopher’s Episcopal Church, 2300 N. Hamline Ave., Roseville. Call 651.639.4246 for more info.

Atheist/Agnostic Alcoholics Anonymous, 3249 Hennepin Ave S., #55 (Men’s Center, in the basement) Mpls, 7 . 8 pm., Open to Men and Women. For more info write tcAgnostic@gmail.com

THURSDAYS

Workaholics Anonymous: 12 step group for finding balance between work, activity and fun. Meets every Thur. 7-8:15 pm. Christ Presbyterian Church,

6901 Normandale Rd. Room 305 - North entrance, enter door on left and up stairwell on your left. Call before attending for any schedule or location updates Jeff 952-465-4928, Liz 612-229-8930, email: wafindingbalance@gmail.com

Red Book ACA/ACOA: Recovery Church, 253 State, St. Paul, 7-8:30pm. For more info call Jacob at 612.819.9370 or Bruce at 651.407.6336.

Recovery International Meeting, St Phillip Lutheran Church, 6180 Highway 65 N, Fridley at 7pm. It is a proven self help method to deal with mental illness including depression, anxiety, anger, mood disorders and fears using cognitive behavior Therapy. Ken, 763-571-5199.

CoDA Group: Co-Dependents Anonymous 12-Step Support. 6-7:30pm at Unity North Church, 11499 Martin Street NW., Coon Rapids, MN 55433. SW corner of US Hwy 10 and Hanson Blvd. Call Chris @ 763.438.3583 for more info. Also check www.coda.org

Adults with ADHD Support Groups: (first time free) Every Thursday morning 10am . noon and every Thursday evening (except last Thurs of the month) 7pm 8:30pm. LDA Minnesota, 6100 Golden Valley Road, Golden Valley, MN 55422. Tel. 952.922.8374 or www.ldaminnesota.org

Eating Disorders Family & Friends Support Group: Open to the public, 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month from 5:45 pm – 7:15 pm at The Emily Program, 5354 Parkdale Drive, 2nd Floor, St. Louis Park, 55416.

A.C.A.: 6:30pm Prince of Peace Lutheran Church 200 Nicollet Blvd #E Burnsville. Step meeting, open to all.

FRIDAYS

Food Addicts Anonymous: a 12-step program dedicated to food addiction. Fridays 8-9pm, Living Table United Church of Christ, 3805 E 40th St., Mpls, 55406. LGBT friendly. For more info call Shea at 612-722-5064 or sheahnsn@gmail.com or www.foodaddictsanonymous.org

Recovering Couples Anonymous: Friday Night @ Minnehaha United Methodist Church, 3701 E 50th St, Mpls, 55417, 6:30 - 8pm. 12-Step couples group meets as couples in recovery from any addiction. The only requirement is the desire to remain committed to each other, and find better ways to communicate and develop intimacy. Call Kathy 612- 545-6200 or Allan 612-309-5632.

Recovery International Meeting at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 4100 Lyndale Ave S., Mpls at 7pm. It is a proven self help method to deal with mental illness including depression, anxiety, anger, mood disorders and fears using cognitive behavior therapy. Ruth 612-825-4779.

Eating Disorders Anonymous: 5:45-6:45pm, Grace University Lutheran Church, 324 Harvard St SE, Mpls on U of M East Bank Campus. Free parking in Lot AA across street. Open. edaminnneapolis@gmail.com, 612.305.8367

Women’s AA Meeting, TGIF Meeting. 6:15 pm at Epworth United Methodist Church, 3207 37th Ave. S., Mpls. Handicapped accessible. Meeting consists of lesbian, bi, and straight women, many of whom have maintained long term sobriety. Chris A. 612-722-1936.

SATURDAYS

OCD Support Group: 2nd and 4th Saturdays of each month at Lord of Life Lutheran Church,-16200 Dodd Lane, Lakeville, MN. 11am -1pm For more information contact Susan Zehr @ sszehr@charter.net or 952-210-5644.

Nicotine Anonymous: Sat. 10am at Linden Hills Congregational Church, 4200 Upton Ave South, Mpls. Enter at the back door. 952-404-1488.

Spenders Anonymous: Our purpose is to stop spending compulsively and work toward serenity in our relationship with money. 1-2 pm at Bethany Lutheran Church, 2511 East Franklin Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55406; street parking or in the church lot; enter through the gate on Franklin and ring the bell; <http://www.spenders.org>

Northeast Minneapolis CoDependents Anonymous (CoDA) Group: East Side Neighborhood Services, 1700 2nd Street NE, Mpls, 55413 (corner of 2nd Street NE & 17th Ave NE). Park in lot behind building, use rear entry door. Saturdays: 1-2pm. Contact Ralph W. at rwink@aol.com or 612-382-0674.

CoDA Group: Shoreview, Shepherd of the Hills, 3920 North Victoria Street, 1 blk north of 694. Please enter from the back/north side of building off

of Gramsie. Door “G”. Follow signs to room #265. 9-10am. Dana, Shoreviewcoda@gmail.com

Overeaters Anonymous Newcomer Meeting: Third Saturday of the month, 1pm.2pm. Sumner Library, 611 Van White Memorial Blvd., Mpls, 55411. For more info contact Allison @ 612.499.0280, Gene @ 952.835.0789 or visit www.overeaters.org.

Overeaters Anonymous Courage to Change Meeting: Saturday mornings 8-9am at St Christopher’s Episcopal Church, 2300 Hamline Ave N. Roseville. Contact Donna with questions at 651.633.3144.

Clutterers Anonymous: St. Christopher’s Episcopal Church, 2300 N. Hamline Ave., (Hwy 36) room 220, Roseville. 12 step support group meets the first, third and fifth Sat. of the month, 10–11:15am. www.clutterersanonymous.net

Debtors Anonymous: men and women using the 12-Steps to solve problems with debt and other money issues.; www.daminnesota.org 952-953-8438. 9-10am, Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church, 4120 17th Ave. S., Mpls, 55407 (rooms 7 & 8, enter sliding glass door facing parking lot.)

Overeaters Anonymous: 8-9 am, Falcon Heights Community Church, 1795 Holton Street, Falcon Heights. Lisa 651.428.3484.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder Support Group: 1st and 3rd Sat. of the month, 11am -1pm Central Community Center, 6300 Walker St., rm. 215, St. Louis Park, MN. Call Burt at 612.722.1504.

Choosing Healthy Sexual Boundaries, Saturdays 10am-noon. Concerns about your sexual behavior? Receiving negative feedback about your sexual choices? Safe, non-judgmental place to talk with other men re healthy sexual boundaries. The Men’s Center, 3249 Hennepin Ave. S., Mpls.

Adult Children of Alcoholics & Dysfunctional Families: Saturday, 10am, ACA Club Fridley, Moon Plaza, Boardroom in the lower level of Unity Hospital, 550 Osborne Road, Fridley. Please see www.acafridley.com for info.

Men’s & Women’s Support Group: Meetings every Saturday (including holidays) at 9am. Prince of Peace Church, 7217 W. Broadway, Brooklyn Park. (north entrance.) Informal, safe place to share experiences of joy and concerns. We promote growth & positive change to meet the challenges of our lives. Call 763.443.4290.

Debtors Anonymous: Using the 12-Steps to solve problems with debt and other money issues.; www.daminnesota.org 952-953-8438. 10:30-noon, Wooddale Church, 6630 Shady Oak Rd., Eden Prairie, 55344. (enter door #1, lower level rm. 147)

South Side Men’s Group: Saturdays, 8:20 to 10 am Support for men working toward positive personal change. Creekside Community Center, 9801 Penn Ave. S. Bloomington. Visit www.southsidemensgroup.org.

SUNDAYS

Double Winners Anonymous. Closed meeting of alcoholic women who combine recovery with Alanon. 5:30pm. Wesley Rm, Lake Harriet United Methodist Church, 4901 Chowen Ave. S., Mpls. Take doors from pkg lot, turn left down the hall. LeeAnn J at 763.234.1054 or Margaret K at 612.823.8279.

Big Red Book ACA, 11:15am at the Cavalier Club, 6123 Wooddale Ave., Edina, MN 55424. Call Therese S. at 952.927.6761 for more info.

Eating Disorders Anonymous: 5-6:30pm in Eden Prairie at Wooddale Church, 6630 Shady Oak Road, 55344. Room 291. Contact Nikki: nikkihaven@gmail.com or call 612.227.4079.

Deep-Healing Prayer Group: Discover how God provides healing of memories, emotions, and the body at St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church, Sundays, 7-9:30pm, www.Door2Hope.org. 612.874.1033.

Calix Society: A group of Catholic Recovering Alcoholics and their family/significant others who desire to strengthen their spiritual growth, meets the 3rd Sun. of the month at Cathedral of St. Paul. Mass at 8am., breakfast/speaker meeting at 9am. 651.773.3117.

Debtors Anonymous: a group of men and women using the 12-Steps to solve problems with debt and other money issues.; www.daminnesota.org 5:30-6:30pm, Oak Knoll Lutheran Church, 600 County Rd. 73, Minnetonka, MN 55305 (enter rear of bldg, the Plymouth 2 Alanon. For more info call 612-388-2944.

Laura's Story

by Laura G.

I grew up in a house with both parents and my older brother. Overall, I was a happy kid who liked school. But there was an undercurrent of pain, a secret I kept: I was abused as a young child. I never told anyone. I learned to hold onto that secret.

I was introduced to weed and alcohol when I was 15 years old but since I was the good girl no one suspected me. The secrets kept building. I blamed my parents, I wanted to be a rebel. I moved out at 18 and danced in bars and nightclubs for the next 10 years all the while hurt, angry, and lonely.

At 23 I took cocaine and I knew I was in trouble. I remember it instantly melted everything away. I didn't think about the abuse, I had self-esteem and I felt good. I couldn't stop. At 29, I got arrested, which was the first time my secrets got some light shed on them. I entered treatment and found out I was pregnant with my son. I got sober for two years, married, bought a house, had a good job, and completed my associate's degree. When my son turned 8, a switch flipped inside me and I began to use again. I lost everything, even the custody of my son.

I entered Wayside Women's Treatment totally broken. I had to start over, and this treatment experience needed to be different. I had never discussed my abuse, never had my mental health diagnosis woven into my care. It was at Wayside that I connected my son turning 8 with my own abuse at the same age resulting in my need to use again to forget. This was the first time I received the help I needed in all areas of my life — therapy, parent-



ing, employment counseling, spirituality, art, and housing. Addiction and the abuse had fractured and impacted everything in my life.

After treatment, I knew I had to get into "supportive housing" because it was the only way I was going to stay sober and be a part of my son's life. I needed all of it, the stability, the community meetings, the coaching, the apartment inspections — even the random drug tests.

I have now been sober for three and a half years. In May, I graduated with the highest honors from St. Catherine's with a Bachelor of Arts in social work. Now my job is to help other families experiencing homelessness secure housing and stabilize. Stability matters.

And now I'm a sober mom with a healthy, happy kid.

This story was provided by our friends at Wayside Recovery Center in St. Louis Park, Minnesota. Do you have a testimony of hope and encouragement from your journey of recovery? We'd love to hear from you. Please send your story to phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com. We'll connect with you if we choose to publish your piece in a future issue. Thank you.

***I was introduced
to weed and
alcohol when
I was 15 years old
but since I was the
good girl
no one suspected
me. The secrets
kept building.***

Resource Directory

Bettors Anonymous

Bettors Anonymous now meeting in MN. Men and women using AA's spiritual solution to recover from gambling addictions. www.bettorsanonymous.org. 612.298.8593.

Counseling

Lehmann Counseling

Help for individuals and families dealing with addiction. Kate Lehmann is an experienced professional offering client-centered substance use counseling. Discrete, flexible, private pay. www.katelehmann.com for more information.

Eating Disorders

Melrose Center

Melrose heals eating disorders for all genders and ages. Our experienced team offers specialty programming for those struggling with an eating disorder and substance use disorder — whether they are in recovery or treatment. Melrose Center has 5 metro area locations. Visit melroseheals.com or call 952.993.6200.

Drugs and Alcohol Treatment

Minnesota Teen Challenge

If you or a loved one is struggling with drugs or alcohol, we're here to help. In addition to our effective and affordable residential Licensed Treatment, faith-based Long-Term Recovery and convenient Outpatient program, we have extensive prevention and transitional/aftercare services. Freedom from addiction starts here. 612-FREEDOM or mntc.org

Narcotics Anonymous Helpline

Drug Problem? We Can Help! Call Now 24-hour (877)767.7676. Also, check out www.namimnnesota.org For a complete listing of meetings, upcoming events, camp-outs, and service opportunities.

Workaholics Anonymous Meeting

Burning out? Workaholics Anonymous provides steps and tools to break free from non-stop work and activity. Newcomers are welcome at our Workaholics Anonymous meeting Wednesdays, noon, Fairview Riverside Hospital, Dining Rm. E. Learn more: 763.560.5199 or www.workaholics-anonymous.org.

To place a Resource Directory listing call David at 612.298-5405 or email at david@thephoenixspirit.com



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Stories of Transformation

Janie encourages other women to share their story. “When women share their story — even when it’s hard, it’s vulnerable, it’s scary — there’s magic in sharing that. It’ll change someone’s life,” she says.

2. BRENT CANODE

Even though Brent led a successful professional life, excelled in sports, and was accepted to honors programs in school, he ultimately was asked to leave these programs because of his substance use disorder. His troubles came to a head in 2004 when he was arrested on charges of buying drugs. Brent was given a second chance by Oregon’s Statistical Transparency of Policing (STOP) program. “Honestly, I owe my life to Oregon’s drug court program,” he says.

While initially recovering in the court-mandated 12-Step program, Brent later took an unconventional and self-directed path — one that heavily influenced his incredible work today. He became the director of the Alano Club of Portland, where for the past decade he has made expanding recovery support services at the club a top priority.

“I knew personally, anecdotally and most importantly empirically, that most people require more than a 12-step meeting to stay sober and experience optimal health and wellness outcomes,” Brent says.

Today the club is the largest non-clinical recovery support center in the United States. It receives more than 10,000 visitors each month and serves as a national model for a modern, multi-dimensional recovery community organization. Alano applies the latest evidence-based support system called the Recovery Toolkit Series, an extensive program of alternative recovery supports that is free to visitors. The program includes mindfulness-based meditation groups, yoga, aromatherapy, nutrition and wellness classes, recovery CrossFit, financial sobriety, and self-care workshops. In 2017, recognition of the innovative contribution that the club makes to the local recovery community, Brent was awarded the Joel M Hernandez Award at the America Honors Recovery Gala in Washington, D.C.

That same year, Brent co-founded the only statewide recovery advocacy organization of its kind, Oregon Recovers. In just 12 months, they have successfully secured key legislation declaring addiction to be a public health crisis in Oregon and requir-

ing the state to produce its first-ever strategic plan to address it.

His work didn’t stop there. In 2018, Brent partnered with leading national recovery scientist Robert Ashford. Together they secured commitment from the state of Oregon to begin tracking rates of recovery in order to plan appropriately for recovery programming — making Oregon the first state in the nation to do so.

Brent has also influenced the recovery landscape nationally, holding leadership positions with the organizations Facing Addiction (a national action council and legislation committee), Faces and Voices of Recovery (a public policy committee) and the Association of Recovery Community Organizations (a recovery research committee.)

The accomplishment Brent is proudest of, however, is simply being an individual and father in long-term recovery.

“When women share their story — even when it’s hard, it’s vulnerable, it’s scary — there’s magic in sharing that. It’ll change someone’s life.”

3. LISSA FRANKLIN

An accomplished athlete and academically gifted from a young age, Lissa’s life held great promise. But an eating disorder that started in third grade and the beginnings of alcohol use disorder starting in sixth grade started to take their toll on her childhood. Even though she initially earned excellent grades, by her senior year of high school, she had stopped all sports as her problematic drinking progressed.

With a few attempts at recovery, Lissa found lasting sobriety in 2012, which she attributes to making it the most important part of her life. From that solid foundation, she went on to graduate with highest honors from two schools. She also founded the U Recovery, the collegiate recovery community at the University of Miami.

College was just the beginning of Lissa’s accomplishments in recovery. She went on to hold a number of leadership positions in South Florida that contributed to shaping the treatment industry. Lissa is vice president of Southeast Florida Recovery Advocates, assistant executive director of Delray Beach Drug Taskforce, direc-

tor of education and community outreach at Life of Purpose, and vice president for Ethics Now. She is also actively involved in the Palm Beach County Sober Home Taskforce.

While in the midst of her incredible work, Lissa discovered she had thyroid cancer. But she didn’t let that stop her. She showed her tenacious spirit by overcoming this obstacle, continuing her incredible professional work, and becoming a qualified National Physique Committee (NPC) bikini competitor.

As a reward for her gargantuan efforts in increasing patient protection and implementing recovery-oriented systems of care within south Florida, in 2016 Lissa received the prestigious Sierra Tucson Gratitude for Giving annual award.

Lissa believes that she could not have maintained her recovery on her own. “Teamwork makes the dream work,” she says. “It is maintaining my recovery that keeps hope alive for the next person.”

4. LISA MCLAUGHLIN

Lisa describes her life before recovery as small. “I was barely holding on to a waitressing job at a breakfast cafe I had acquired in an effort to rein in my nighttime routine. By this point in my use, I had cut out bars, socialization, friendships, and romantic relationships,” she says.

She continues, “Most visioning was focused on how and where to acquire substances with the smallest amount of interaction with others.”

In contrast, she describes her experience today as “an expansive, Technicolor life.” A social entrepreneur, Lisa has actualized many of her former pipe dreams. “I’ve been able to channel the dogged ambition with which I sought drugs and alcohol into building new worlds of wellness in recovery,” she says.

As the co-founder and co-CEO of Workit Health, Lisa has led a team that developed an innovative self-led online addiction care company backed by the National Science Foundation. She has held several leadership positions in some of the world’s most respected digital health and learning companies, and has served as an Innovation Fellow at the University of Michigan’s School of Information. But her service doesn’t stop there: Lisa also mentors women in startups and recovery. She is also a writer, and a biohacker in training. “I have a glorious family and network of friends who inspire me,” Lisa says.

Olivia Pennelle is the founder of Liv’s Recovery Kitchen, a site dedicated to helping people flourish in their recovery. Liv is passionate about challenging limiting mentalities and empowering others to direct their own lives, health, and recovery.



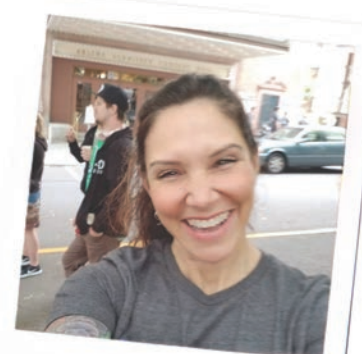
LISA



BRENT



LISSA



JANIE

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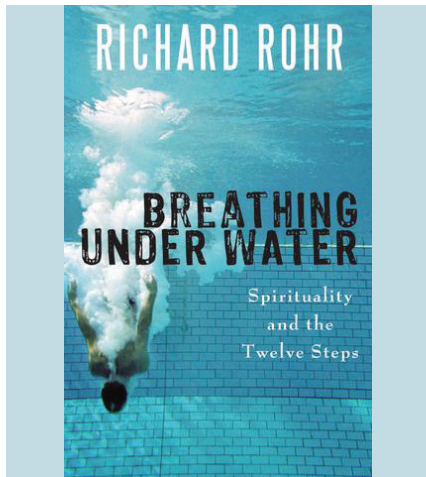
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Books



Breathing Underwater

Spirituality and the Twelve Steps

By Richard Rohr
FRANCISCAN MEDIA

Franciscan Priest, Richard Rohr, explores the parallels between the 12 Steps and spirituality - specifically, the Gospels.

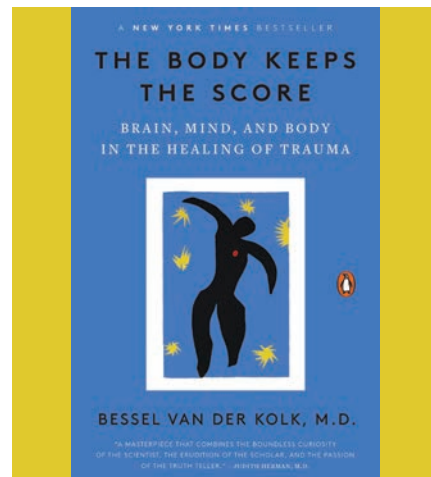
By the author's admission, *Breathing Underwater* was written with four assumptions about addiction: we are all addicts, "stinking thinking" is the universal addiction, all societies are addicted to themselves and create deep codependency on them, and some form of alternative consciousness is the only freedom from this self and from cultural lies.

Written from a Christian worldview, Rohr does not "exempt" the Church from contributing to the ills of culture. But he offers ways in which examining and working out the 12 Steps can help usher it back to foster real transformation within the world.

At the end of his introduction to his book, Rohr writes, "the foundational ways that I believe Jesus and the 12 Steps of A.A. are saying the same thing but with different vocabulary: we suffer to get well, we surrender to win, we die to live, we give it away to keep it.

He continues, "this counterintuitive wisdom will forever be resisted as true, denied, and avoided, until it is forced upon us-by some reality over which we are powerless."

The Phoenix Spirit was provided a free copy of the book by the publisher.



The Body Keeps the Score

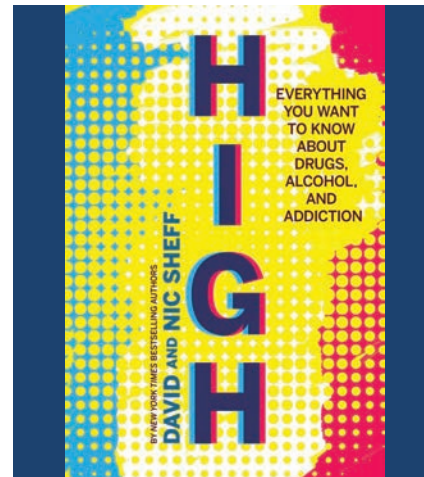
Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma

By Bessel Van Der Kolk, M.D.
PENGUIN

One of the world's leading experts on traumatic stress explains how trauma affects people, its underlying neurobiology, and the many new treatments that are making it possible for sufferers to move beyond trauma in order to reclaim their lives.

Trauma is a fact of life. Veterans and their families deal with the painful aftermath of combat; one in five Americans has been molested; one in four grew up with alcoholics; and one in three couples have engaged in physical violence. Such experiences inevitably leave traces on minds, emotions, and even on biology. Sadly, trauma sufferers frequently pass on their stress to their partners and children as well.

Renowned trauma expert Bessel van der Kolk has spent over three decades working with survivors. In *The Body Keeps the Score*, he transforms our understanding of traumatic stress, revealing how it literally rearranges the brain's wiring—specifically areas dedicated to pleasure, engagement, control, and trust. He shows how these areas can be reactivated through innovative treatments including neurofeedback, mindfulness techniques, play, yoga, and other therapies. Based on Dr. van der Kolk's own research and that of other leading specialists, *The Body Keeps the Score* offers proven alternatives to drugs and talk therapy—and a way to reclaim lives.



High

Everything You Want to Know About Drugs, Alcohol, and Addiction

By David and Nic Sheff
HMH BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS

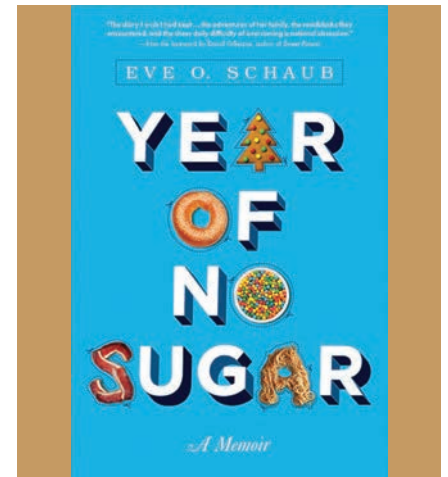
From David Sheff, author of *Beautiful Boy* (2009), and Nic Sheff, author of *Tweak: Growing Up on Methamphetamines* (2009), comes the ultimate resource for learning about the realities of drugs and alcohol for middle grade readers.

This book tells it as it is, with testimonials from peers who have been there and families who have lived through the addiction of a loved one, along with the cold, hard facts about what drugs and alcohol do to our bodies. From how to navigate peer pressure to outlets for stress to the potential consequences for experimenting, Nic and David Sheff lay out the facts so that middle grade readers can educate themselves.

From Nic Sheff:

I'm not trying to scare you with my story. My dad and I wrote this book so others—so you—will have the information I didn't have when I was a teenager. I'd heard about the dangers of drugs, but I never took them seriously. Like almost everyone I knew, I thought I could get high sometimes and stop when I wanted. I wish I'd known the truth.

Our own experiences, and the experiences of others, made us want to understand drug use in our culture—why some use; why some use to excess; the impact of drugs on our brains, on our bodies, on our relationships, and on society as a whole; which drugs do what; and how and why some people abstain, how some start and then stop, and how even those who are addicted can get clean.



Year of No Sugar

A Memoir

By Eve O. Schaub
SOURCEBOOKS

In an age when sugar is continuously unmasked as a health villain, this perfectly timed memoir chronicles the story of the Schaub family's twelve months without added sugar of any sort: no fructose, no refined cane, no molasses, no honey, no maple syrup, no corn syrup—in an attempt to live healthier and better. Along the way, Eve Schaub became a sugar sleuth, science geek, and stand in for the rest of us who aren't quite ready to shun the sugar just yet. It's a fascinating experiment that reveals just how tightly we're all held hostage by sugar, and what it takes to kick the habit.

If you have a book you'd like reviewed or have an old favorite you'd like to share with others, please contact us at phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com.

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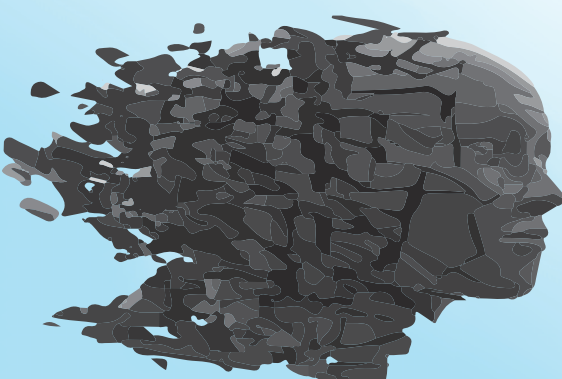
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WRITERS / ARTISTS

The Phoenix Spirit is interested in writers and artists with experience writing about recovery & addiction. Or are in recovery themselves.

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FINDING HOPE ISSUE

My Story

“For some of us, it takes more than a few ‘2 by 4’s across the forehead’ before we get the message.”

quences that involve the criminal justice system. For some of us, it takes more than a few “2 by 4’s across the forehead” before we get the message.

Yes, I was lucky that way. My criminal activities were all committed under the age of 18, so I don’t have a criminal record to fight against daily in my adulthood. The hurts are still there – with the victims — the property I stole or the automobiles I destroyed that were usually not my own. Most importantly, the hurts I committed against my parents who cared so deeply for me, and of course, the many ways I hurt myself.

I had been a theater kid from age five; performing eventually in professional theater groups around town, including what was then Chimera Theater and the Children’s Theatre Company (CTC). I had studied with Andahazy ballet from ages 5 to 16, then furthered my study of dance at CTC. I paid a price for this with my peers – and was relentlessly bullied in private, catholic middle school for three years straight, never telling an adult about it. Just internalizing it. I focused instead on honing my singing, acting and dancing skills, and my entire family system supported me through this passion. This included late night pickups at 2am from my bleary father after a rehearsal ended; my mom taking an overnight Wall Street Journal paper route to help pay for private lessons; supporting me in the performances and fighting with the school systems to allow me to basically check into homeroom daily, then get all my credits from the theater companies I was involved with.

The sacrifices were many from my parents, let alone myself, but this was something I was so totally, utterly dedicated to, that it was like breathing for me.

So imagine what it felt like after studying to be at the top of my craft at the young age of 17, to have the artistic director tell my mother that they were planning for an Asian tour with some portions of a production, but that, even though I had a leading role, he was not opting to take me as part of the tour as he “couldn’t trust me in front of a camera.” My behavior had become too erratic – too drug infused for him to be able to rely on me as a performer.

Around that time I decided it was a good idea to shoplift if I saw something I wanted. It wasn’t because I was in need – it was because I enjoyed the thrill.

One day I heisted a wallet from the old Sears store in the Midway area of St. Paul. I was spotted and the undercover cop was young enough to give chase. I ran like an Olympian down University Avenue until he tackled me. Once hauled back into an office in the bowels of the building, they called my mother, to which she said, “Lock her up. I’m not bailing her out of this one.” (She had wisely started attending Al-Anon to try to keep her sanity...). That was my first experience with in the juvenile justice system.

I had gone from a Catholic school girl, to a hard, hitch-hiking, burn out. I had no fear of anyone or anything, and had, in fact, placed myself in the foster care system so that I could get away from my parents who always seemed 10 steps ahead of me and my using patterns. I was exhausted trying to keep up with my addictions while also fending off my mother’s ‘sixth sense’ of where I was and what I was doing. Easier to put myself in the homes of strangers who most often didn’t care about me or my wellbeing. I faced attempted rapes, assaults, neglect and a facelessness



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I’m a person in long-term recovery from addiction. What that means to me, is that I haven’t picked up an alcoholic drink or drug since October 1981. I know to some of you that seems like eons. But to me, it still feels like yesterday. The pain of the end of my use was so acute that I couldn’t imagine surviving it. I had lost everyone — friends, colleagues, family — and the consequences of my use came down on me like a dump truck of bricks on my head. The onslaught of consequences was as relentless as my use had been. Unstoppable. Unforgiving.

I’m writing this because I think it’s important to talk with people, especially youth, about my experience of getting sober at age 18 – and staying that way. It’s a unique experience in that so many people don’t even realize they have a problem until they are well into their adulthood and have experienced more severe conse-



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that I had never known, now that I was in the “system.” I rarely stayed in one foster home or high school for more than three months at a time. I became one of those hard girls. The kind with the black inner eyeliner and burned out smirk. The kind of girl to be afraid of.

Suffice it to say, I neglected to show up for a matinée performance at CTC after I had gotten on a tour bus of some punk rock band whose show I had gone to see the night before, then decided to go with them to New York City that night. Not my best decision-making. I was evicted from the show I was performing in and evicted from CTC altogether. Now it was really over. Everything I had studied and worked so hard for – done. Now I had a choice – go stand in line in NYC for a bit part in a soap commercial with 1,500 other girls, or do something different.

I also had to graduate from high school. I watched my boyfriend (and drug supplier) get sober, then my best using friend walked into an AA meeting. She was two years younger than I and wasn’t able to pass her fake ID at the bouncers. We had left her out in the van, freezing, on a cold February night, while we drank, danced, and drugged at First Avenue until the wee morning hours. She didn’t say much to us that night on the way home, but she clearly had a lot of time to think her life through that night. That week, she walked into a local AA meeting she had looked up, and never turned back. She’s been sober since April of 1981, and we are still best friends. It didn’t look good for me at that point, as the first thing her AA group told her was that she “needed to get rid of that friend, Molly”. I had walked with her to that first meeting, pleading with her to just smoke one more joint with me. I was desperate. I was losing everyone.

Suffice it to say alcohol wasn’t my thing but drugs sure were. I loved anything that made me numb, and alcohol just didn’t do it for me. I was practiced at becoming numb and hadn’t had a real feeling in years. Getting sober was terrifying to me, as the prospect of actually feeling something terrified me. But I relented to the pleading & begging of my mother – who was really the only one to stick with me through this ugly journey, and attended an outpatient treatment program that, in hindsight, was perfect. Perfect because I was the youngest in a group of five: a mid-30’s suburban pill-popping mom; a 40-year-old alcoholic who looked about 60 due to his use; a compulsive gambler who had gambled his car and house away; and a compulsive overeater. I don’t know if they do this anymore – I see a lot of doctors only getting sober with other doctors, or lawyers getting sober with other lawyers – but at 18, I saw firsthand the many forms addiction could take – and it wasn’t just an 18-year-old punk rocker into drugs.

If I hadn’t been exposed to this, I’m not sure I would have recognized when I was transferring addictions – to food, then exercise, then relationships, then shopping. I am so grateful Hazelden Outpatient offered this full spectrum of exposure back then.

It was a long process to fully embrace recovery — that whole ‘honesty in all our affairs’ was something I didn’t quite get for a very long time. I had to keep rebelling against something, so the rules of recovery was what I took on. I hated what I interpreted as sexist language in the Big Book, and the chapter “To The Wives” just sent me – let alone the whole “God thing.”

So I changed all the male pronouns to female when I was asked to read the preamble or the Promises at a meeting. I like to think I helped give other AA attendees a different perspective.

I like to say the first five years of recovery I got nothing but the First and Thirteenth Steps. But seriously, I had the First Step down pat, and although I may have simply been dry, not sober, I hung in there. Until I was ready for the Tenth Step. Then back to taking on Step Two. In other words, it may not be as easy as Steps One through Twelve in perfect order. But as long as you aren’t picking up that drug or drink it will come to you. You will get this. It may take five or ten years before you really start to live in full recovery, but that’s OK! There is no perfect way of doing this program.

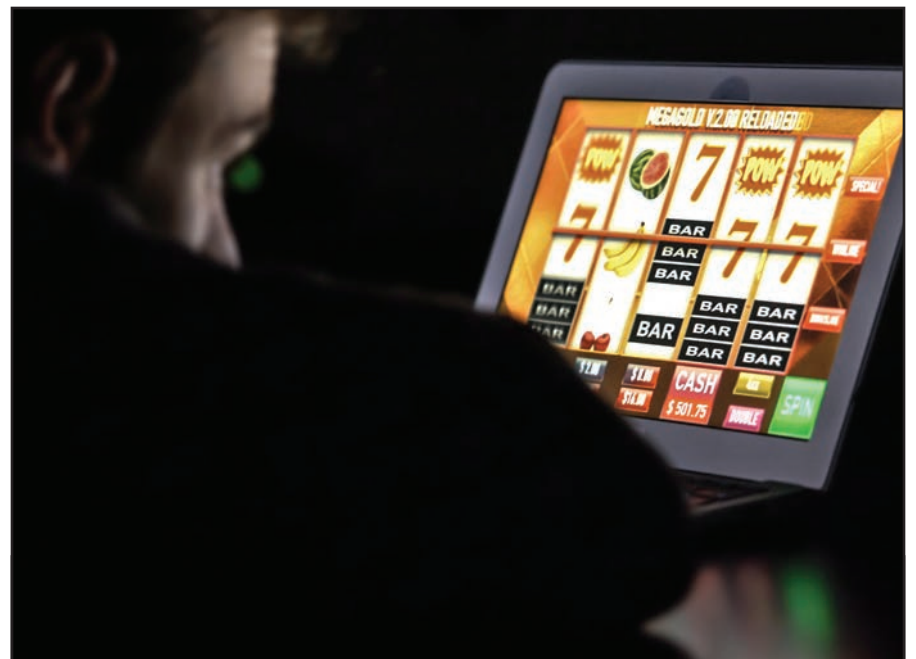
No one is perfect, and our recovery certainly isn’t. Progress, not perfection, is what I strive for, as taught to me by so many that came before me. Being clean and sober in early youth was a blast. I found a group of others in recovery around my same age and we went out dancing at the clubs until closing time. We went to see Prince, The Time, The Clash, Henry Rollins, Gang of Four, Iggy Pop – did all of the things one does when one is young – and remembered it the next day! We guzzled water and sweat it out in the mosh pits. Then went to Embers and bugged the poor waitresses there for yet more coffee and whipped cream until 4am because we were poor and couldn’t afford much else. But we laughed and loved life with all our hearts, and learned with each other to deal with life on life’s terms, not ours. We learned to live and let live, and to let go when necessary. We stuck with the winners and watched others die in the throes of their relapses. We learned from others’ mistakes and grew to basically treat our abstinence from drugs and alcohol like an allergy – a life choice.

It has worked for me. And I am grateful. But I got over my doubts as to whether I was an addict/alcoholic or not early on. The ones I see still struggling are often struggling with that concept. Once you know you’re an addict, it’s easier to stop the gears in the mind from grinding. Know it. Own it. Then move forward. If you know what that means, you’re ahead of most.

I can’t tell you I will be this way for the rest of my life, though the odds are pretty good after 37 years that I might be able to stay sober. But not if left to my own devices! I have been ‘crispy’ in sobriety – dry as a bone — as I didn’t go to meetings for 6 or 7 years for a while. Once I went back, I realized it was the community I was missing out on that these rooms offer. Some people get that through church or volunteerism or neighborhood block parties – for me it is going to the same meeting every Friday night and investing in others around me. Caring for them and letting them care about me.

I am far from perfect. Anyone who knows me will tell you that. But I keep trying to get better.

***Molly** is the Director of Business Development at Vinland National Center in Loretto and Minneapolis, MN. Vinland is a 501(c)(3) non-profit substance use disorder treatment center dedicated to helping those with multiple disabilities live full lives.*



SPONSORED POSTING

Gambler Healing Offers Online Hope for Gamblers

Zack is worried about his gambling.

He’s been losing a lot lately – so much that he had to dip into the family savings account to cover this month’s mortgage. In the no-win cycle familiar to problem gamblers, he feels compelled to place larger bets, in the hopes of making up for losses.

He has tried to cut back or quit on his own, with no luck. He can’t admit how much he’s been gambling to anyone – not even to his wife. He wonders if he needs help, but he has no idea what to do or where to start.

It’s estimated that 1 to 2 percent of the general population has a gambling problem, and as many as 3 to 4 percent have engaged in problem gambling at some point. Yet only a tiny percentage of those seek help, often because they are so embarrassed by the financial fallout from this process addiction.

“Gambler Healing,” a new program developed by the counselors of Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota’s Gamblers Choice program aims to circumvent the shame and stigma by bringing help right into the privacy of a concerned gambler’s home.

The online e-curriculum is based on the 12 steps of Gamblers Anonymous. After enrolling in the course, the user can go through the program at their own pace or, if they’d prefer, work through it with the guidance of a licensed therapist.

Exercises help users evaluate whether their gambling has become a problem, while worksheets, readings and journaling exercises take them on a self-guided tour through the core principles of 12-Step based recovery. Users are invited to honestly answer questions such as, “Which areas of your life became increasingly more unmanageable because of gambling?” Or, “Make a list of ways in which you tried to control your gambling.”

Although a user can complete the course in the privacy of one’s living room, the curriculum also offers elements of the group perspective via taped segments of group discussion, in which graduates of the local Gamblers Choice program share their own experiences and discuss relevant recovery themes.

Other features of the e-curriculum include access to the daily reflections/readings of Gamblers Anonymous, concrete tips on how to stabilize one’s financial situations and insights on addiction from Dr. Stephen Timm, a consulting psychologist on the program.

Portions of the online course can be previewed at www.gambler-healing.com. The complete course is \$99 and is accessible to anyone who speaks English and has an internet connection.



GAMBLER HEALING

A 12-step online treatment program for your clients.

www.GamblerHealing.com

from page 1

Being Our Brother's Keeper

My wife told me that her workplace asked her to take a week off as she has accumulated too much vacation time. I asked her where she would like to go in the middle of October. Perhaps some island in the Caribbean, the Grand Canyon or some other exotic place. She said, "Let's go to Fargo for a week. I said, "Really?!" She said, "Yes."

We don't know a soul in Fargo. Why would we go to Fargo, North Dakota?! Many of her friends asked why we would go there. Knowing my wife has an uncanny history of keen intuition, I said, "Well of course we will go to Fargo." We've had other similar mind-blowing trips due to her psychic instincts. So off we went.

I wish I could tell you that after several days in Fargo, it really is this great place to be. Actually, it was at first quite a disappointment. Thanks to past floods the city is laid out like one big strip mall surrounded by enormous levees. Despite having many nice people, the view in town was rather conservative, especially during the Kavanaugh hearings. The only art museum hardly had any paintings. There weren't many community happenings. So my wife and I got as gloomy as the weather there. We kept asking ourselves, "So, why are we in Fargo?"

Turning up our intuitive senses we decided to do something about it. We sought out nature. We found enormous grassy levees to walk on, the same ones that protected the city from the floods of the Red River. Actually, we needed to walk the river as the day before a sad event had occurred in Fargo. An article in the local newspaper said that a local 20-year-old woman, who was a top student and popular kid, had suddenly died. No details were given as to how she died, and we wondered how it could have happened. We sadly reflected about how such a young woman could lose her whole life before her. To break the silence my wife said, "Well she probably killed herself." Like a knife to the heart we were gripped with dread. I didn't want to believe it.

We continued walking atop these green monsters as we reflected on our feelings. Finally we came to a lake-like part of the river. In the middle of the lake was a man slumped over in a small boat who appeared to be fishing. We wondered why he would be out alone fishing as it was only 30 degrees out. We wondered what he was doing. Finally he began to take the boat out of the river and onto a ramp behind his car. Just like that I told my wife I need to meet him as I descended from the levee. He just seemed so alone. I went up to him and asked, "So how's the fishing?" He began describing how he got nibbles from some northern pikes but caught no fish. He said, "I didn't really come here to fish. I just needed to get my head on straight." Initially I worried that I was crossing his boundary and didn't want to work on my vacation. But feeling his pain in my body even without

"I asked what his daughter meant to him. That's when the floodgate opened. Sobbing he could barely talk. I could barely talk too."

knowing his story I decided there was no way I could dismiss his suffering. I decided to listen to all of his pain for as long as it took.

So I said, "Well, you are talking to the right person. I am on vacation but work as a psychologist who listens to people. Can you tell me what you mean?" He said that the past couple of days have been hell for him and his wife. They have thought about nothing else but how they are responsible for their young adult daughter taking her own life. He said he and his wife are numb with grief and that he couldn't even

function, despite the huge support they got from their church. I gasped at his revelation. We asked if it was his daughter whose news article appeared in the local newspaper the day before. He said, "Yes."

We couldn't believe that it was just a coincidence to meet this man after recently reading about his family in the newspaper. I felt a divine guidance in meeting this man and knew we were doing important business together. He explained how he and his wife have done umpteen things in the last year trying to get through to their daughter as they knew something was really wrong. Apparently she got hooked up with a group of negative friends who glorified suicide. I told him how deeply sorry I am to hear of his enormous loss both for him and his wife.

I said as a father this news would devastate me too. I mentioned that unfortunately many depressed people cannot take in the abundant love that is often offered them, and that blaming themselves as parents is completely normal and is also a testimony to just how much love they actually had for their daughter. I also said that just because they take on the blame, it doesn't make it true. Their efforts to care for their daughter speak volumes.

I asked what his daughter meant to him. That's when the floodgate opened.

Sobbing he could barely talk. I could barely talk too. I asked if I could give him a hug, like father to father. We both sobbed for 15 minutes in each other's arms. Neither of us talked for minutes afterwards, knowing that something significant was happening between us. We sat once again in silence. Eventually I asked him what he did for a living. He said he was an electrician. "Electrician!" I said, "Man that's exactly what I need right now." The main circuit had just burned out in my house due to a storm just before we left. I asked, "Would you come home with us to St. Paul as I really need your help?" We laughed together as he gave me some instructions on how to repair my switch. Life became slightly less burdensome for him. He drove off smiling and waving goodbye to my wife and me. On cue my wife turned to me and said, "Now we know why we were supposed to go to Fargo!" I gave her a really big hug and marveled at a divine presence.

The weirdest part is that we ourselves were blessed from this experience. Our whole attitude changed towards Fargo. Our mood brightened as we realized that we had made the best choice in going there. We had made a difference to that man as he did for us. If that was the only thing we did there that week it would be way more than what we expected on vacation. We felt so privileged to have

BROTHER'S KEEPER to pg 11



Eve was born with a heart defect and underwent an extremely risky surgery at just 3-and-a-half months. The life and death crisis inspired her mother, Annamarie, to start the Newborn Foundation (newbornfoundation.org). It's saving lives worldwide.

These are our customers. They're beautiful, with and without their Spectacle Shoppe glasses.



See Different

Uptown, New Brighton, and Grand Avenue



continued from page 10

shared that time with this beloved man, whose name we never even learned.

I felt we were our brother's keeper and it gave us more hope than we could have ever imagined getting. Like a miracle the next day we found plenty of good things to do in Fargo, including going to the zoo which houses the oddest animals in the world. But that's another story. We left with a newfound hope in Fargo and in ourselves.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE OUR BROTHER'S KEEPER?

It takes dedicating ourselves to something beyond ourselves. So much of modern living means that we don't get involved in other people's problems. Our exaggerated adoration of rugged individualism and self-sufficiency causes many of us to refrain from getting involved. We may say, "Well, that's not my problem" when someone near to us is suffering, or, "What do I have to offer anyway?" The truth is that when we are hurting we would wish to have someone approach us to offer help. The fact we overlook is that we are all in the same basket and that other people's pain is our problem. Obviously, we cannot offer help to someone who refuses it — nor should we offer help solely for the purpose of feeling good about ourselves. True altruism is different from codependency. I wasn't trying to control the man in Fargo. I was simply offering him a shoulder to cry on in his moment of anguish. I decided not to be scared of his dependency on me no matter how great it was. I knew I could draw the line when I needed to.

So many of us live the "let's not get involved" life. What if we all decided to be our brother's keeper in our daily lives? Perhaps we could shovel the elderly neighbor's walk next door. Or we could offer to get groceries for the less fortunate handicapped woman down the street. Or we could spend 10 minutes listening to our mail delivery person when she has a difficult day.

It takes so little to show others that we care, even people we don't know. After all, we are all each other's brothers and sisters. When it comes to caring, little things mean a lot. I recall what the Sisters of Carondelet said about their caring for others, when asked how they came to be so charitable. They said, "It's not that we do great things; it's that we do small things with great love." This perspective will put all our personal struggles in perspective and give us more purpose to living than we ever imagined. Even one sincere smile on our morning walk to a total stranger can change the world, both ours and the other person's.

WHY DO WE HOLD BACK?

Some of us are not ready to love others. We may be so preoccupied with our own troubles we feel we have very little to offer others. We may fail to see that genuinely offering to others may help us with our own troubles. We fail to see the gold mine in getting involved with people who are down and out. Some of us are so ashamed of ourselves that we feel we have little to offer. We make excuses for not being charitable by saying, "Let someone else help out" or "It's not my job to solve someone else's problems."

Clearly when we avoid getting involved we are the ones who lose out. Had I not helped the man in the boat on my vacation I would have had a miserable week and maybe felt much worse for walking away from a person in need. I never felt it was my job to solve his problems. I just wanted to comfort him.

Finally, some of us dislike needy peo-

ple because we ourselves are unable to set limits with how much we care or else we generally lack compassion towards others. We fear that we will lose ourselves in other people's problems because of our own neediness. We may see needy people as deplorable, not seeing how they reflect our own limitations. The reality is that we will find ourselves in other people's problems since we ourselves have some version of the same issues. We are all one.

FIRST STEPS

It's best to sincerely ask yourself, "Do I want to make a difference to others in my daily life?" Doing so for any of us means we live for something beyond ourselves and our own selfish interests. Clearly it is OK to say "No" as our own personal issues may preoccupy us. If you do say, "Yes" I happen to believe there is a whole hidden universe beyond what we know that is much bigger than ourselves. I get glimpses of that world when I dream at night and have voices of a Higher Power talk to me, or when I intuit knowledge with no rational explanation as to how I obtained it. Perhaps you have connected to a friend in some special way that still dazzles you and you cannot explain. You may want to read *Almost Anything: Notes on Hope* by Anne Lamott (Riverhead Books, 2018) and *Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor E. Frankl (Beacon Press, 1952).

You may already know how to be your brother's keeper but let me make a suggestion if you feel stuck. May I suggest that you do something compassionate or generous each day on a small scale and notice how you are affected by it. Perhaps you can keep a daily journal of kind acts and share what you are learning with a trusted friend. Out of this practice you may develop a psychic sense filled with compassion—ways of anticipating or knowing things before they happen that mean a lot to others.

You may begin to get a glimpse of the bigger picture to life and what a divine presence is trying to teach you. Trust your intuitive way of knowing things even when the world typically relies on hard science and logic to know what is true. Logic has its place but there is a whole unknown world out there that defies logic and really matters, sometimes even more than our rational world. If you

have ever fallen in love you know what I mean. The fact is that even science defers to intuition. As a former research scientist myself I can tell you that much of the hard sciences originate in the intuitive and psychic world of our brains that has nothing to do with logic. Many of us over rely on technology because we are too scared to embrace the psychic realm.

If you take nothing else from this article remember this: Investing in hope and compassion shields us from the worst suffering of human life. Just do it.

John H. Driggs, LICSW, is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in private practice in St. Paul and co-author of *Intimacy Between Men* (Penguin Books, 1990). He can be reached at 651-699-4573.



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Mindfulness and Equanimity: A Way to Stay Steady in Hope

by Kathleen Sprole

We know we can't save anyone from their pain and suffering. We know trying to rescue or change someone in the throes of addiction drains us to the point of depletion; it becomes a never-ending cycle of feeling hopeless and helpless. We desperately want to maintain hope and feel guilty if we give up. The good news is, there is a way to maintain hope without burning out, and it starts from inside you.

Having worked with clients with eating disorders, chemical dependencies and other addictions, as well as their families, I understand that hearing, "Well, you can't change them," doesn't make it any easier to watch a loved one suffer the natural consequences of addiction and destructive behavior. There might not be anything that takes away the distress of bearing witness to the struggle, but there absolutely is a way to take care of yourself so you can maintain hope, caring, and support for your loved one no matter where they are on their path.

IT STARTS WITH MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is simply being present with your experience without trying to change or judge it. Mindfulness happens when we slow down, even become still, and intentionally turn our attention inward. We can observe our internal world. Right now you can pause and notice your five senses, notice thoughts and feelings come and go, or feel each moment of your breath. Your human brain will want to analyze, categorize and judge. Mindfulness is the practice of noticing these tendencies without attaching to them, seeing that there is a self or mind separate from our impulsive human reactions.

Without Mindfulness, we run on autopilot and impulses. Without even realizing there's an urge, we impulsively react to feel better. For instance, we might offer to help someone out — again — who has asked for money 10 times before and not paid us back. We might again lend them the money, before we realize that it is the desire to not feel guilty and helpless that is running the show. Or, we might scream at someone because we weren't aware of how much resentment toward that person has built up.

Practicing Mindfulness, through formal or informal methods, helps us strengthen our ability to have more awareness in everyday moments. We react less impulsively and often have fewer regrets or apologies to make.

AWARENESS OF THE ARGUMENTS

The source of stress is often arguing with reality. Mindfulness is a practice of going inward to notice your own experience exactly as it is. Sometimes this means sitting with feelings of helplessness, pain, grief, anger, resentment and the desire to feel better. We want it to be different, even think it "should" be different. Though when we strive for something to be anything other than it is, or when we try to cling because we don't want it to change, we aren't accepting what is. This is a stressful energy drain that leads to losing the energy necessary to stay hopeful.

We can turn to acceptance. Acceptance is at the core of Mindfulness practices. I'm sure you've heard before, "It is what it is." This doesn't have to mean we like the reality we are in. At times the experience is

downright unpleasant. When we resist the reality (even if it's an unpleasant one), we increase our suffering. It's like paddling upstream in a strong current. Perhaps saying to yourself, "This is difficult and this is how it is right now," can help you lean into acceptance. Acceptance can also mean acknowledging exactly how we feel without judging it. Stating to yourself, "I'm losing hope and I notice feeling guilty," likely feels better than, "I am such a bad parent/sibling/spouse/friend for losing hope."

In teaching and guiding Mindfulness, I've heard many critiques and arguments about Mindfulness feeling too passive, especially when there is known harm being done. Mindfulness and Acceptance are not synonymous with passivity. Mindfulness helps us connect to our true values and make decisions accordingly, instead of reacting without thinking it through. In fact, when we connect with our true values, we find ourselves motivated into purposeful, loving action.

STEADY THROUGH THE STORM

Equanimity is connecting with a steady inner peace no matter what the circumstance. Equanimity is something we can practice, though it also something that becomes more naturally available the more we practice it.

I remember walking a client through a brief meditation and visualization to practice equanimity. I asked her to imagine a chaotic storm in the middle of the ocean. The storm had crashing waves, strong gusts of wind, and rain that could be seen when the lightning broke the darkness. Then I asked her to sink below the surface until she was 50 feet down. With her eyes closed she said, "It's still. I know there's a storm up there, but I can't feel it down here." I explained that that's equanimity; finding that tranquil place within our self that we can connect to no matter what "storm" or chaos is in our life. This doesn't make us blind to the storm, rather it helps us to observe it without getting knocked around, gasping for air in the crashing waves (that aren't in our control).

Equanimity reminds us that we can remain grounded in our own sense of self, separate from external circumstances or others' choices. This prevents burnout, including from the energy of maintaining hope and care. Hope can stay resilient and steady by observing without attaching.

THIS IS YOUR JOURNEY, TOO

I've worked with many families and spouses that weren't even aware they were caught in the chaos of their loved one's addictions. It was as if they were living it as their own and taking it on like it was their job. When asked to Mindfully — with compassion and non-judgment — be aware of how this was for them, they first noticed feeling tired. Then they typically realize that they have lost track of their own goals, interests, and well-being. No wonder there was nothing left to keep hope alive.

When someone you love is going through the storm of addiction, it's easy to get caught in analyzing their decisions and trying to convince them of ways to change. Regardless of the boundaries and limits you choose to set for how you support your loved one, it can be helpful to remember this is also about your own journey.

Just like when I ask Mindfulness students to use rush hour traffic as a practice for accepting what is and increasing patience, you can use any stressful situation as an opportunity to grow into your best self.

It seems counter intuitive, but when we focus on our own well-being, we are often more able to maintain and sustain hope and loving intentions for others. Focusing in on how you want to grow as a person can anchor you into your well-being. This can

anchor you into equanimity, that ability to stay steady and tranquil no matter what.

Kathleen Sprole, MSW, LICSW is a mental health therapist, board approved supervisor, and founder of One Moment Center, LLC. For more information www.onemomentcenter.com

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Participants will gain an understanding of how trauma, particularly early childhood experiences, affects the ability of men to develop and sustain healthy relationships. River Ridge, 14750 Lac Lavon Drive, Burnsville. \$20. 2.0 CEU Hours Pending Approval: MN Board of Social Work | MN Board of Marriage & Family Therapy | MN Board of Behavioral Health & Therapy. www.riverridgemn.com/professional-training/ to register or for more information.

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Presented by Derrick Crim, Ed.D, MAPM, MA, LADC, CPPR. January 25, 2019, 9:00 am-12:00v. Like trauma informed care, this workshop informs in what ways cultural responsiveness involves vigilance in anticipating and avoiding institutional processes and individual practices that assign value (positive or negative) to differences and similarities among people; impeding quality person-centered care. \$25. Fourth Friday Forums have been approved for 3 hours of CEUs for LADCs and Social Workers by the Minnesota Boards of Behavioral Health & Therapy and Social Work. waysiderecovery.org to register.

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DO THE 12 STEPS LEAD A PERSON TO A SPECIFIC RELIGION?

by Shannon Lowell

The quick answer to the question posed in the above headline is no. The 12 steps are a spiritual program developed through Bill W and others' experiences of being in the grip of alcoholism.

Bill W. was not the first, but was himself the beneficiary of another recovering alcoholic's testimony of the power of working a spiritual program for recovery from alcohol. Bill W. explained in The Big Book (aka Alcoholics Anonymous) that before recovery he was not an atheist and did not believe many people really were. It was his assertion that atheistic belief would mean, "...blind faith in the strange

proposition that this universe originated in a cipher and aimlessly rushes nowhere (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2001, p.10). In fact, his scientific heroes of the time even "...suggested vast laws and forces at work....I had little doubt that a mighty purpose and rhythm underlay all. How could there be so much of precise and immutable law, and no intelligence? I simply had to believe in a Spirit of the Universe, who knew neither time nor limitation" (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2001, p. 10).

You see, the 12 Steps of recovery have one goal in mind: to bring those who become entirely willing to obediently choose honesty and humility 24 hours a day to a spiritual awakening. Not just once, but again and again, each and every day that the steps and relationship with a power greater than themselves are prac-

He innately felt that there had to be a power greater than the alcoholic sickness to heal it because human medicine/psychiatry had no cure.

ticed and applied through faith. This faith is not blind faith, but faith that the steps combined with power from our higher power sought out in prayer and meditation consistently and daily will produce sobriety. On top of sobriety the steps will build strength, endurance, hope, direction, maturity, self-control, the power to deny destructive selfishness, openness, community, belonging, accountability, self-respect, freedom through the gift of forgiveness, the reordering of behavioral choices, inner peace, mental clarity, joy in living, and pleasure in serving others.

Bill W. taught that he had a profound awakening in which past memories aligned with the present testimony that was being shared with him, such that God was able to remove his unwillingness to believe in a power greater than himself. The question from his friend, "Why don't you choose your own conception of God?" (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2001, p. 12), led to the realization, "It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than myself. Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning" (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2001, p. 12).

You see, in the 12 Steps there is a beautiful freedom given to each participant. Come as you are, where you are, and know that if you will acknowledge where your beliefs stand today, and obediently and fully commit to working the steps, the God of your understanding will bring you to the faith you need to live the program successfully. This was called moral psychology by William D. Silkworth, M.D. — a doctor who worked with many alcoholics and whose writing is included in The Big Book.

In Silkworth's experience, alcoholism was a death sentence of sorts. He had not witnessed successful life change or recovery until he witnessed Bill W. share his story and his steps with those in the then institution for alcoholics. What Silkworth reports is that through "moral psychology," Bill W. and the men he led out of alcoholism were able to achieve "unselfishness...

the entire absence of profit motive...community spirit...[belief] in themselves, and still more in the Power which pulls chronic alcoholics back from the gates of death" (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2001, p. xxvii).

Dr. Silkworth had been convinced that emotionalism, merely focusing on behavioral Band-Aids, or psychological tricks was not enough to help alcoholics. He said, the approach had to have, "depth and weight" (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2001, p. xxviii). Silkworth testified about his own experiences of powerlessness when faced with healing an alcoholic. He innately felt that there had to be a power greater than the alcoholic sickness to heal it because human medicine/psychiatry had no cure.

This has also been my clinical and personal experience with addicts of all kinds. This includes anyone that has a compulsive pattern, an addictive cycle, a "bad habit" they seemingly cannot overcome that is bringing any level of brokenness into their life, their relationships, or their social/vocational functioning. The experience of powerlessness when attempting to help others is quite profound. It is not until I surrender control of the healing to my higher power can I be of any assistance to my broken client. Many people, many addicts, are skeptics of the 12 Steps and its programming. If that person is reading this, in the Silkworth tradition, I would encourage you to read the The Big Book front to back, slowly and carefully with your ears open to hear and receive. As Silkworth said, "perhaps [you've come] to scoff, [but you] may remain to pray" (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2001, p. xxxii). The 12 Steps will not lead you to a certain religion but they will lead you to a relationship; a relationship with a power greater than yourself that is the power you need to change your life for the better.

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Reference: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Big Book. NY: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 2001.



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Fear stalks our world, brazen and shameless. I expect fear to occasionally sneak in and out of alleys, but to see it parade through public streets as though a welcome visitor is.....frightening!

There are public and private fears; they embolden each other. Like bullies on the playground, they compete for space and power. Who will be the scarier today?

Fear is dangerous because it paralyzes, like the sting from a scorpion. It stops my thinking and problem solving brain. It lights up my reptilian brain – the one that responds with fight, flight or freeze, the one developed for survival by our earliest ancestors.

Fear's first cousin is anxiety. While fear is often an immediate response – a heart thumping jolt of adrenaline – anxiety is like a chronic cough, always niggling in the background, not serious enough to locate as a real problem. I recently saw a cartoon with an executive-type in a corner office, the assistant saying, "I'm sorry, he blocked this whole hour for anxiety." Don't we do that sometimes, block an hour, a day, a week for anxiety? As though that were really getting something done!

I am fed up with fear. I have spent enough of my life being afraid of things over which I have no control. I am afraid it may rain. Well, it may! I am afraid someone won't like me. Could be! I am afraid that I will have to change. I can choose! I am afraid I will die. I will! I am afraid that I will miss the joys of my life if I focus on fear. Now, there is something to be afraid of!

People use fear to manipulate. Cable news feeds our fears to get us to watch their programs. Pundits poke at us to see if they can gin up enough fear energy to boost their ratings. Disasters serve as financial bonuses for news networks. I rarely watch news programs for just that reason – I resist being manipulated.

The use of fear to control was well described by the 16th century Italian, Machiavelli. While he admitted that love was an effective persuader, he argued that in almost all circumstances, the best course of action for a ruler was to instill fear in people, for if fear overwhelmed the hearts of citizens, there was no chance of rebellion.

I've decided to take on my fears this year. I am ready to move from fear-dom to free-dom. Here is my strategy.

Facing Fear



by Mary Lou Logsdon

First I will get curious about my fear. Where is it from? Where does it pulse in my body? What assumption (often erroneous) underlies the fear? Is this fear mine or someone else's?

I grew up in the 50s when the great fears were communism and nuclear war. We worried about where we would hide when the big bomb was dropped. While this was not my fear, it hovered over us like threatening storm clouds, sapping joy and wonder. We are now provoked to fear the migrant, any religion not our own or what someone else might take from us. When I have been contaminated with a contagious fear I ask, do I really want to carry this? Is this really mine?

If I do own the fear, what is its origin? Did I inherit this fear? Many of us with parents who lived through the depression of the 1930s inherited the fear of scarcity. Our parents kept things long past their usefulness, just in case. I don't have to keep that fear. I can discard it along with the dozens of empty plastic containers that have also outlived their usefulness.

When I own my fear, I can examine the assumptions underlying it. I used to fear public speaking. My assumption was that I didn't have anything worth listening to. Or my voice would crack. Or I would faint at the podium. If I fear crossing bridges, I might assume that bridges are not safe and fall regularly. Is the assumption factual? Seneca said 2,000 years ago, "We suffer

more often in imagination than in reality." Many fears depend on wild imagination. I check my assumptions and replace them with facts.

Secondly, I'll notice when I am afraid and act anyway. Psychologists tell us when we avoid that which we fear, the fear increases rather than diminishes. Every time we avoid the same fear, it grows. My nervous system is aroused when I experience something novel, something new. If I never walk into my fears, they are always novel. I don't ever become familiar with them and they remain alarming. Not only that, when I avoid the dreaded thing again, I experience a sense of failure. Now I am not only afraid, I lose a piece of confidence to meet the fear.

When I was afraid of speaking in public, I wasn't sure I could relax and be myself. The more I avoided public speaking, the greater my fears grew. Then I joined Toastmasters. All I did with Toastmasters was practice speaking in front of an audience. Pretty soon it wasn't so terrifying. Pretty soon I found I enjoyed talking at a podium. Pretty soon I wasn't afraid. I did that by increasing my exposure to what I was afraid of, until I was no longer terrified.

If I focus on my fear, it will expand. If I focus on my bravery and resilience, that will expand. Where will I focus?

Finally, I will ask for help. I do not have to face my fears alone. Often talking about my fear is enough to lessen its impact. I might take some quiet time to be with my Higher Power. Both talking with and listening to HP calms my reptilian brain and clears a thinking space for considering options other than fearful fretting.

Sharing with my spouse or close friend what it is I am afraid of can make it seem less scary, like when my five-year-old self walked into the dark basement with my brave 10-year-old cousin. I can ask a friend to go to the doctor with me when I fear having cancer. I can ask a neighbor to join me as I introduce myself to the new renters down the block. I can ask a 12-Step friend to go to a meeting with me. I do not need to do it alone.

This year I choose to not be controlled by my fears or someone else's. I will be curious about my fears, face those that are truly mine, and ask for help when I need it. I will tame my fears and walk into freedom. I choose not to be afraid. And you? What fears are you ready to release?

Mary Lou Logsdon, leads retreats and provides spiritual companionship in the Twin Cities. She can be reached at logsdon.marylou@gmail.com.

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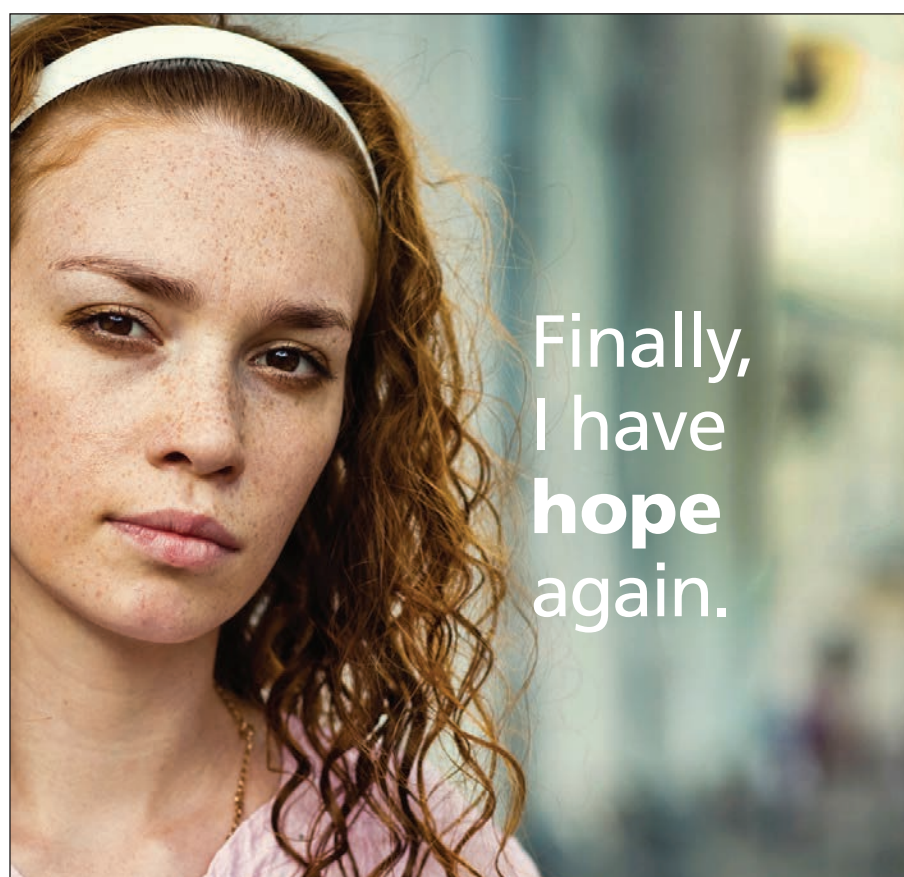
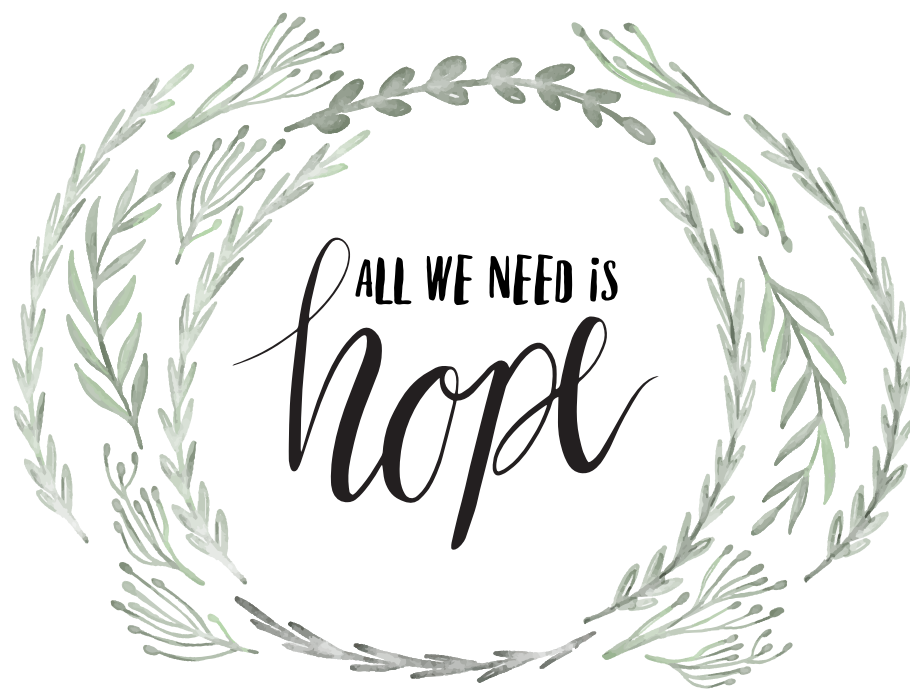


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