

the Phoenix Spirit

Celebrating 39 years of Recovery, Renewal, & Growth

March / April 2019



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HEALING THROUGH THE ARTS

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Let's Just HAVE & Make Stuff Up FUN

by Pat Samples

"Some of the funniest people I've ever met have been at recovery meetings." This high praise comes from someone who is in the business of being funny. John Gebretatose, who left alcohol behind 15 years ago, performs and teaches Improv theater. He also mentors others to do the same.

At HUGE Theater in Minneapolis, a popular home and incubator for Improv, Gebretatose is the director of diversity and inclusion. He is also the co-founder of an African-American Improv comedy troupe called Blackout, which has performed internationally.

WHAT IS IMPROV THEATER?

Improv is a lot like when you were a kid and got invited to play house or cops and robbers, says Gebretatose. You jump into whatever's going on in the scene, bringing your fresh take to it with the goal of everybody having a good time

together. "We're just there to build community and have fun," Gebretatose explains. Hang around Improv for a while, and you are also likely to build new skills in communication, resilience, and self-trust.

When Improv is performed live on stage, the actors make up a scene on the spot. For example, they may ask audience members to call out suggestions – for a location, a conversation topic, and a period in history. Picking the first answers they hear, they create a scene based on the suggestions. Suddenly they're in a barbershop during the 1930s talking about "The Ugly Duckling." Absurd? Yes, and perfect material for generating laughs.

At a recent Blackout performance at Mixed Blood Theatre, the troupe leader invited an audience member to describe

highlights from her day. The Improv team then performed exaggerated versions of these highlights, including an agonizingly codependent encounter between a needy workmate of hers and a needy customer. In the scene, the two needy people became so entwined that the suspenders of the workmate were soon wrapped around both of them. The audience exploded with laughter.

If the thought of doing Improv before an audience terrifies you, don't worry. Classes and informal "jam" sessions abound where you can learn Improv skills just for the fun of it. Performance anxiety is soon over-ridden as the encouragement, safety, and connection you experience

pull you in. Once you find yourself being funny and getting wildly cheered for that, well, who wants to stop? Even your "failures" are lauded for bravery. Among the venues for these classes are the Brave New Workshop, HUGE, Stevie Ray's Improv Company, and Dreamland Arts, as well as various school and community education settings.

ANXIETY FADES

Improv contributes to mindfulness and relieves anxiety, says Jim Robinson, a psychologist who teaches Improvisation and Mental Health at the University of St. Catherine and also teaches the Brave New Workshop's course, *Managing Anxiety Through Improvisation*.

LET'S JUST HAVE FUN to pg 8

The Insufficiency of Real Love

by John H. Driggs, LICSW

Most of us are aware of those sublime experiences of life we call love. We may feel uplifted in being more than we already are through the continued tenderness of a loved one. It's as good as it gets. We may also have magnificent moments when we have transported a

dear one to be a better person through our efforts at kindness. The power of such caring may live in our memories for years as we witness the Higher Power of real love.

But what if love is not enough? Sometimes, it just isn't. It's no wonder then, that we lay crestfallen and shocked when someone we love to our utter limits does not benefit from the miraculous power of our devotion. It's no wonder then, that we may feel like a failure when our love has failed to make a difference. We have all seen fireworks fizzle when it comes to true love. Who among us likes lighting a firecracker on Fourth of July only to have it fizzle out, blow up in our face, or die out?

Sometimes our deepest love can be quite insufficient. These experiences aren't fun to talk about. So brace yourself. Let's look at some heartbreaking, yet sometimes transformative consequences of insufficient love.

♥
My husband and I go through this every Mother's Day. Each year I wonder what I did so wrong. I feel like such a failure. I don't know what I can do to change things between my children and me. I've tried everything. Sent birthday cards that went unacknowledged. Invited each of my adult children out to lunch to reconnect. Sent presents at Christmas to show that I care. And I get nothing back from my three adopted kids. I'm not sure they would even show up for my funeral. I've practically begged them to call me sometime. If they only knew how much love I put into giving them a good life here in America after their childhood ordeal in Korea. Not a day goes by that I don't think of them at some level. Not one of them has contacted me. I live with unbearable pain. It is not something I talk about with anyone.

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CALENDAR

UPCOMING

Underwater: Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts presents this exhibition of paintings, drawings and fiber works until March 15. Closing reception March 14, 6:00-8:00 pm, at 1860 Minnehaha Ave W, St. Paul. Featuring Paralympic gold medal swimmer, Mallo-ry Weggeman. Event is free and open to the public. More info at interactcenter.org.

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.

Recovery Innovations Breakfast: Mon- day, April 1 from 8:00-10:30 am at St. Cloud State University, Atwood Memo- rial Center (Voyageurs Room), 6th Street South, St. Cloud. Guest speaker Colleen Ronnei, of Change the Outcome organi- zation. After an exclusive screening of their 2018 documentary, there will be a community conversation on opioid use and addiction with local experts, young people in recovery, and Ronnei. Free event. CEUs are available. Visit tinyurl. com/recoverybreakfast to register and for more info.

25th Annual Sunlight of the Spirit Weekend: April 12 to 14 (with regis- tration beginning at 5:00 pm on Friday the 12th), Holiday Inn, Fairmont, MN. \$16 pre-registration and \$19 at the door.

Questions / registration email: sotsweek- end@gmail.com.

36th Annual Gratitude Night: Satur- day, April 13, 6:30-10:00 pm at the Min- neapolis Convention Center, 1301 Second Avenue South, Minneapolis. Ballroom A (across from Dunn Brothers). Tickets \$12 in advance, \$15 at the door @ Minneap- olis Intergroup.

6:30 pm - Social hour / AA service info
7:30 pm - Program and speakers
10:00 pm - DJ and dance

ONGOING

Volleyball Night: Join Sober Corps on the Fourth Sunday of each month for Vol- leyball 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 in- formation contact info@sobercorps.org or call Alan at 952-212-1623.

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

Mothers of Adult Children: A support group for people whose moms used vio- lence. Our support group will offer a safe place to talk, listen and share feelings, ex- periences and stories with other moms in a comfortable, confidential environment.

We meet 1st Saturday of every month, 9:00-11:00am. Breakfast provided at Cal- vary Baptist Church — Maki Room, 1st. floor, 2608 Blaisdell Ave S., Minneapo- lis. 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-in- spired weekend retreats focus on com- mon issues faced in recovery: forgive- ness, spirituality, healthy relationships, grief, and loss. Call 1-800-262-4882 for more info.

All Recovery Meetings: Minnesota Re- covery Connection is hosting All Recov- ery meetings throughout the Twin Cities. These meetings honor all pathways to re- covery, 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: Wednes- days 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 disor- ders, relationship problems or self esteem issues. We use *A Woman's Way through the Twelve Steps* by Stephanie Covington. Peace Presbyterian Church has a commu- nity dinner at 6pm on Wednesdays and we provide free childcare for 12-Step par- ticipants. Reclamation-Ministries.org or call 612-879-9642.

Hazelden's Second Sunday Retreats: The second Sunday of each month ev- eryone in recovery is invited to Hazelden in Center City, MN (Cork Center) for an inspirational day of workshops, fellow- ship, 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 there- coverychurchstpaul 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

Basket Making 101

by Julia Edelman

About this time last year I ventured to the North House Folk School in Grand Marais, MN, for three days of basket weaving. Yep, Basket Weaving 101. Ostensibly, the adventure was to create and take home our very own, personalized, Birch Bark Berry Basket. In reality, the trip was much more profound.

None of us knew quite what to expect, having never attended any of the wide-ranging offerings at the North House Folk School. And so we all packed for three days of being together in a cabin up north, collectively making dinners, catching up on each other's lives, and intentionally stepping away from the demands of our urban lives in creative pursuit.

The trip began in the pragmatic fashion that organizing six friends on a north woods adventure entails — who's driving, what food shall we bring, who gets the single rooms and who doubles up. That sorted, and safely settled in up north with all of our souls warming around the wood-burning fire, the weekend's unfolding and weaving began.

The class itself was a hands-on lesson how to bend and twist strips of birch bark into a small container. The instructor painted for us the picture of harvesting the birch bark in early July, slicing the tree and peeling back the skin so as not to damage the trees. Holding the skin in my hands I paid tribute to the sacrifice of the trees for my own pleasure, much the way we might pray before a meal, thanking the animals for our food.

We soaked the birch bark, stripped the large pieces with a cutting tool into one-inch by 2-foot segments, and began the weaving process. We each had a rough idea of our intended finished product, and as we became engrossed in the task at hand, the room became heavy with the silence of concentration.

Then came the mutterings, "Oh, man, this is really frustrating. My bark keeps breaking!" And the comparisons guised in praise, "Wow — Susie, I love the coloring in yours.... Mine looks so dull." And so went the afternoon with dreamy periods of artistic absorption dotted with camaraderie and breaks for tea. We learned an appreciation for the history and challenge of basket weaving, and the many faces of the art form itself. For instance, basket weaving is a cultural phenomenon and an intrinsic part of indigenous peoples existence as they use the vessels for religious ceremonies and food gathering. In a larger sense, the art of weaving grasses, reeds, and willow together has been life sustaining by creating dwellings and other shelters.



Perhaps it was this sense of the timelessness and worldliness that enveloped our group as we became more engrossed in our individual yet collective process. That sense that we were each engaged in an endeavor of creating that was both personal and unique — bringing into each creation our personalities, talents, and ideas of beauty and/or utility. And is there a place for both?

Each night, we engaged in a different type of weaving. The beautiful and inexplicable intertwining of human spirit, of friends and families and triumphs and losses. Most of us had lost a parent in the recent past, and as the hours passed, stories of our mothers emerged. And of our fathers or stepfathers, our great-grandparents from Norway or Yugoslavia. As the fireplace warmed us, we let ourselves be vulnerable with one another as we talked about our childhood memories, or concerns about our children and our children's children.

It was apparent that our lives and stories, each as unique as our baskets, were intertwined. We wove together tales that were different in the telling, but similar with the themes of love, grief, hope, pride, and regret.

I came home with a humble and beautiful berry basket, filled with all of those things, invisible, rolling and tumbling over each other in a way that made me simultaneously weep and sing.

This issue of *The Phoenix Spirit* also pays homage to local arts programs available for people struggling with Serious and Persistent Mental Illness (Bridgview), and poverty, homelessness, unemployment, chemical addiction, and mental health concerns (Avivo). See pages 6 and 7.

Pat Samples invites us to explore the art of Improvisational Theatre in her article *Let's Just Have Fun and Make Stuff Up*. And why not? Shakespeare said, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players."

Make your life the best possible performance.

the **Phoenix Spirit**

RECOVERY • RENEWAL • GROWTH

*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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To learn more, contact Jes Reyes at jes.reyes@avivomn.org or (612) 752-8282.

**Walk-In Substance Abuse
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SUPPORT GROUPS

MONDAYS

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.

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 fposmn@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)

Richfield Codependents Anonymous: 7pm, men & women Richfield Lutheran Church, 60th and Nicollet or call 952-649-9514.

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.

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.

WEDNESDAYS

AA Meeting, 6:30 – 8:30pm St. Christopher’s Episcopal Church, 2300 N. Hamline Ave., Roseville. Call 651-639-4246 for more info.

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, 952-545-2586.

Eating Disorders Family & Friends Support Group: Open to the public, 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month, 5:45-7:15 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.

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: blooming-tonma@hotmail.com

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 Thurs. 6-7:15 p.m. Christ Presbyterian Church, 6901 Normandale Rd. Room 210 North entrance, enter door on left. Call before attending for any schedule or location updates. Liz 612-229-8930, Gretchen 615-423-9444 email: wafindingbalance@gmail.com

New CoDa East Metro Group: Rasmussen College, 8565 Eagle Point Circle N, Lake Elmo (exit north to Radio Dr. on I-94 E). 6:30-7:30pm. Joseph H. at 715-497-6227 or LaTosia 651-319-2554.

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.

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. 952-582-6000 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. 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

Overeaters Anonymous Meeting: 9am at Macalester-Plymouth United Church, St. Paul. For those still suffering from compulsive overeating, bulimia and anorexia.

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 @ 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; 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.org

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 10am 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.

ABOUT THE LISTINGS

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the support groups on this page. However, we recommend that you contact the group before attending. If you have a listing and need to make a change OR you would like your group included (and on our website), please reach out to us at phoenix@thephoenix-spirit.com. Thank you.

Amber's Story

by Amber J.

I haven't always been known as a person in recovery, as a matter of fact a label that many knew me as is would be addict, meth-head, felon, thief, liar, and many more. I spent 14 long years loyal to a drug that should have killed me. Yet, I stand.

My Life Then

By the time I was 19-years-old, I had two children by two different fathers, was in college pursuing a degree, all the while working at 3M as an intern hoping that I would one day become an employee. I had always dreamed of working for such a wonderful company. Little did I know, that the day I chose meth, my life and the lives of others around me would be changed forever.

Throughout my addiction I was given numerous opportunities to change but I didn't; from spending time in jails/prison, to being a part of the drug court system, through several inpatient treatment programs and even outpatient ones. But none helped me because I wasn't ready.

I spent 14 years using drugs and committing crimes which involved countless victims. The destructive lifestyle that I led became my priority; despite the pain or hurt I caused my victims, children, or anyone else around me. My past was nothing short of self-seeking and damaging. I never once took into consideration how my actions would impact those in my path.

My Life Now

In 2010, I entered a long-term program that wound up being the catalyst to change in my life. Today, I am over 10 years clean and an advocate in the recovery community. I have been sought out to speak at many events to share my experi-



***I have been
forgiven of my
past: my slate
wiped clean***

ence, strength and hope. It has taken me years to repair my past and the relationships that I have broken. I wish I could say that once I got sober life has been 100 percent great; this is far from the truth. However, I know now that I am the one in charge of my choices; I am in charge of my future.

In December 2018, I went in front of the Minnesota Board of Pardons asking them to forgive my past crimes. That day will forever be an imprint in my life as it has been a pivotal point in my life where another change happened: I was granted a pardon from the State of Minnesota. What an intense day that was! I have been forgiven of my past; my slate wiped clean.

Recovery is a daily choice for me. I look at the people I love and think to myself, "there's no way I could ever let them down." I am no longer a victim of my circumstances like I once believed I was.

Today, I am a professional working woman.

Today, I choose to live.

Today, I choose recovery.

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.

Resource Directory

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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St. Paul native, Nick Diffatte, has won multiple national awards for both magic and comedy. At only 23, he's already headlined on the Las Vegas strip, at the famous Magic Castle in LA, and on the Late Late Show with James Corden

Nick views the world through his Spectacle Shoppe glasses. ...Even as he makes some of it disappear.



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HEALING THROUGH THE ARTS

Bridgeview Heals Through Art

Many people understand that art can foster creative expression of the body's energy and knowledge, the mind's ideas and the heart's emotions, and can often facilitate significant overall healing. Treatment centers, mental health professionals, and hospitals across the country have found ways to bring artistic endeavors to their patients, as a means for self-expression and often profound healing.

In this issue of *The Phoenix Spirit*, we feature art from Bridgeview, a local hub for adults living with Serious and Persistent Mental Illness (SPMI), who often struggle with the stigma of their diagnosis. Isolation from others is common with this population, and Bridgeview offers a setting that promotes social interaction, psychosocial rehabilitation and support.

Artists are encouraged to express their identities as artists and share this vision with their peers. Many have expressed that art is quite literally a means of survival for them; without this outlet, they would feel further isolated by their illness.

Many of the Bridgeview artists have been honing their skills since 1985. The process of artistic creation for this population is calming, stress reducing, self-regulating, and creative, it is a way for feeling and process exploration. It is a container for one's hopes, wishes and dreams.

Exploring the soul of art in a personal way, showing resilience despite a devastating disease, and being transformed by the role of The Artist is at the core of Bridgeview's mission. Having fun is key to being part of this learning and creative process.



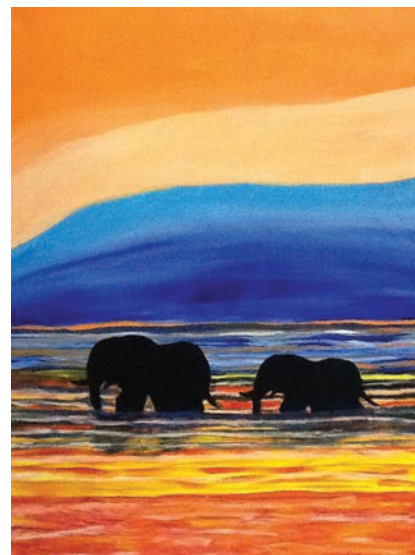
Jill, *Family Tree: She Who Came Before Me*

Art doesn't care who you are or where you come from. It accepts you as you are, where you are — whether that be at the end of a paintbrush, or looking at a picture on the wall. Art speaks to everyone, and reminds us of beauty and possibility at times when the world seems dismal. Art is healing...and hope.



Maria, *Phoenix*

While in the moment, I find art soothing and it gives me a sense of accomplishment.



Gayle, *Evening Stroll*

My pictures usually have to do with nature and its beauty, and how it changes. Depicting nature and animals in painting is calming for me. I get absorbed in my painting and it relaxes me so much.



Kerry, *Mandola*

Art is healing for me because it calms my anxiety and is a healthy coping mechanism. I used to self-medicate before I started therapy. I am learning that art builds my self-esteem.

Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts
Presents

Underwater

January 25-March 15
Closing Reception: Thursday, March 14, 6-8 pm



Tosjania Brooks, *Seahorse*, 2018

Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts is pleased to present *Underwater*, a whimsical exhibition of paintings, drawings, and fiber works that celebrate underwater communities, and water as a sustaining source of life and inspiration. Curated by Interact artists who served on our 2018 Artist Advisory Council, *Underwater* also emphasizes our interdependent relationship with the earth.

Closing Reception

Thursday, March 14, 6-8 pm
Mallory Weggemann remarks at 6:30 pm

Please join us for a viewing and reception to meet the artists and hear a brief talk by US Paralympic gold medal swimmer, sports correspondent, and disability advocate Mallory Weggemann.



Weggemann will take a break from training for the 2020 Tokyo Paralympic games to share her incredible story of resilience, and how swimming, and the water, changed her sense of what was possible for her life after paralysis.

Enjoy bubbles (and other refreshments) available for purchase, as well as light, underwater-inspired apps!

Event is Free and Open to the Public
Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts
1860 Minnehaha Ave W, Saint Paul, 55104
interactcenter.org
@interactcenterarts



Art From Avivo



Michaela Rachor, *A New Day*, Watercolor on Paper. “Art helps me focus on the beauty in life. What comes from this process is a feeling of gratitude and acceptance.”

Art is a problem solver for me. Since I was a child I have enjoyed and entertained myself with drawing. Being an artist makes me feel independent, because I can express visually my interpretation regarding the environment around me. I like to work off photographs with changes in mind, where I use color and imagination to express emotion in various subjects. I like to make portraits of people, animals, and places that intrigue me. I make art to make connections with people.

Michaela Rachor practices in drawing and painting. She explores people, animals, plants, and landscapes in her work. She applies unique color palettes to her work and likes to focus on expanding line in her images. She has exhibited with Kenwood Retirement Community, ZagZum, and Artability. She has received compositional recognitions from Courage Kenny Art of Possibilities. Originally from Germany, her family immigrated to Canada and then to the United States.



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Faye Buffington-Howell, *Rebirth*, Mixed Media on Paper. “Never give up! Never surrender to discouragement – keep trying – each day the best you can. Do whatever it takes. Your effort will pay off.”

I have been an artist for over 20 years. I am retired and focus my time on being creative. This time span has given me the opportunity to find and experiment with various mediums and techniques. I am varied in subject matter involving nature, landscapes, figures, and representational art.

Faye Buffington-Howell is an artist practicing in drawing, painting, collage, and mixed media. She has a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts from Fort Hays University and has exhibited extensively throughout the Twin Cities. She recently won the 2018 Artability Poster Contest.



Deborah R. Flye, *Three Musicians*, Acrylic on canvas. “Recovery is to take footsteps that are directed on a path that is lit with hope for tomorrow.”

As an artist I enjoy producing art from many different styles and periods of art. I consider myself a multidisciplinary artist, practicing in ink, pencil, acrylic, collage, book arts, and also perform in church choirs. I like to pull from historic periods of art when making art. I like to keep art movements alive. I am primarily inspired by cubism because I have myopia, which is astigmatism. Everything I see is broken up and fragmented. This comes out in my art.

Deborah Rachel Flye was born in Fort Wayne, Indiana and has been entertaining, performing, and volunteering since 1996. She is a VSA member and a master drummer and dancer. She performed in Washington, DC with VSA International Family Day Festival. She has also studied with St. Francis College, Fort Wayne School of Art, and Art Institute of Minnesota, concentrating in commercial art, fine art, and graphic arts. Deborah is new to Minneapolis as of August, 2017. She has been accessing art resources to help establish in a new community.

Let's Just **HAVE FUN** from page 1

"Improv develops a mindset grounded in the present moment," he says. "Anxiety occurs when we're not in the moment — when we're worrying about the future and regretting the past. You want to run away to get relief, and then you feel guilt and shame for leaving." Improv calls your attention to what's happening right now, asking you to respond to what the present moment requires.

Robinson points out that, for addicts, anxiety is often a gateway to trouble. Rather than feeling uncomfortable feelings that arise, they may seek stress relief from alcohol, chocolate, sex, or other self-destructive sources. In Improv, you practice living each moment fully, then letting go and moving on, so you can be available for the next moment.

Some Improv activities intentionally create chaos to generate humor. They can also help players learn to meet chaos in everyday life with present-moment confidence and creativity. "Improv is a low-stake situation where you get the opportunity to try doing things differently," says Robinson.

Improv classes and jams emphasize safety while allowing room for risk-taking, honest connections with others, and mutual support. After every exercise where you create a scene on the spot, you'll find people cheering you on, no matter what comes out of your mouth, Gebretatose points out. "That's going to build your self-esteem," Gebretatose emphasizes, "You see people walk away with way more confidence than when they started the class."

Robinson confirms this confidence building, saying that after a spontaneous scene is created, "We talk about what worked [well], and what skills they already have that made it work." Gebretatose adds, "We set it up so people feel like they can do it, because they can do it."

SAFETY AND SUPPORT ARE BUILT IN

Guiding principles for Improv are to stay curious, non-judgmental, and supportive of the other players. You learn to think in terms of "Yes and..." no matter what your fellow players offer you in a scene. If another improviser walks up to you and says, "Hey, honey, let's go mountain climbing today," you look for ways to play along and respond within the role and the occasion this person offers you. Your response might be, "Sure, baby, rising to

the top is still on my bucket list," or "I wish I could, dear, but my hiking boots are in the wash." Funny — in part because these quirky, almost-believable responses flow along with what your partner offered.

Classes and jams start out quite simply, giving you a chance to first get yourself into a playful, non-self-censoring mode. Improv teachers introduce games where you can't fail and you laugh a lot. In fact, Improv is a failure-rich environment. Things that normally seem "off" can often seed the funniest responses. That's why failure is referred to as a "gift."

HUGE Theater believes so strongly in safety and support that they present their students with a bill of rights. Among these rights are:

- You have the right to define what feels fun and what feels comfortable (and uncomfortable) for you without judgment from others.
- You have the right to turn down a suggestion you feel is demeaning.
- You have the right to fail.
- You have the right to be brilliant.

Some of the stated rights are meant to dispel fear of the unknown. "If we can remove the fear that someone's going to grab you or touch or pick you up, we'll limit the physical contacts to handshakes and high-fives, or whatever we all agree on," says Gebretatose. "Maybe it's no physical contact. And we've learned it does not stop the fun."

"We also have a shared agreement that anybody in a scene or anyone watching gets to say, 'Time out' if they are bothered by something in the scene. And everybody will honor that and respect them for being brave to say 'Time out,' and they'll freeze the scene or whatever."

EVERYONE GETS TO PLAY

Gebretatose noted that Improv has historically been practiced mainly by white people. Wanting to widen the participation, he sought out and invited local comedians, actors, spoken word artists, and other performers of color to give it a try. To help them ease their way into this new territory, Gebretatose created monthly Improv jam sessions at HUGE exclusively for people of color. "If people there are a reflection of you, you are more likely to be relaxed and to continue," he says. It worked. Before long, more identity-specific jams were



The Heart Bomb group from Brave New Workshop's "Love and Other Social Diseases." Photo credit: Dani Werner.

introduced, including one for people over 40, one for Latinos, one for Native Americans, and still others specific to gender. A variety of Improv teams that got their start at HUGE have begun popping up on stages around the metro area.

Duck Washington, a Twin Cities actor, director, playwright, and member of Blackout and other troupes, says, for him, performing with other African-American Improvisers makes for a rare kind of closeness and authenticity. "There are not a lot of spaces where you can have honest conversations," he said after the Mixed Blood performance, where scenes were peppered with race-related humor, adding, "There is a comfort in doing things that might seem out of place in other Improv."

Washington also says he enjoys Improv because, "It makes me a better person. It makes me happy." His practice with "Yes-and" helped him deal comfortably with glitches in a show he is currently directing. When cast members were not showing up for rehearsals due to wintry weather, Washington says, "It would be easy to fall into the hole of *Man, this is impossible!* But no, I see that this is the situation and I just move into *How do I go about working through it?* Whatever happens, you 'Yes-and' it."

Jenni Lilledahl, co-owner of Brave New Workshop, explains, "Improv reconnects you with yourself and reminds you that you have the ability to be creative, make mistakes, figure things out, and find your strength in the world." She has

brought Improv training to people with autism, developmental disability, and brain trauma, among other groups.

Lilledahl also founded Gilda's Club, a resource center for people touched by cancer. Every week, she offers an Improv workshop there, creating what she calls, "a magical, safe and sacred space where we just get to play." She says, "Sometimes people just want to forget about cancer for an hour, or if it comes up, to find a way to still laugh."

What Twin Cities actor Adam Glatz likes about Improv is that, "it brings out the most truthful expression of a person, because there is no chance to edit yourself. And while you're being vulnerable, people are saying yes to you."

Pat Samples is a writer and speaker who supports others in living creatively and writing their stories. To connect with her visit www.patsamples.com.

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The Ability to Identify as an Artist First

How People Incorporated's Artability Program Challenges Mental Health Stigma

by **Kristen Felegy, M.S.**
Communications & Marketing Manager, People Incorporated

Artability humbly began 25 years ago in a church basement with a few instructors and participants and it has grown to be a robust, integral part of People Incorporated. It gives hundreds of individuals the ability to identify as artists each year through more than 550 free workshops and an annual art show and sale. Also, through collaborations with other organizations in the Twin Cities art community, Artability allows individuals' identities as artists to expand to budding, independent entrepreneurs. Artability programming coordinator Corilyn Wagner creates the schedule, teaches many of the classes, and connects artists to galleries, special events, art crawls, and creates opportunities for artists to sell their original art and prints of their work.

"When people come to Artability classes, they have a sense of community support and they get to do something creative and try something new," says Wagner. "I think trying new things and exploring new artistic mediums has a great power to it. It allows people to really be courageous and put themselves out there."

This bravery and confidence created through the workshops makes taking the

next step toward participating in the annual Artability Art Show and Sale every October less intimidating. The show and sale, which is open to the public, gives artists the ability to display and sell their artwork to the community. Within this idyllic setting, their identities as artists evolve from solitary personal expressions or feelings, to a public stage where they share their talents and abilities with the world. This opportunity provides artists with an immense sense of validation, pride, strength, dignity, and respect in who they are and who they want to be. The depth of emotions communicated in their art reflects relatable, human experiences that anyone can understand, giving them a powerful voice in their recovery that also dually helps shatter mental health stigmas.

In 2018, more than 160 artists displayed nearly 600 works of art, from paintings, charcoal, drawings, graphic works, and sculptures, as part of the three-day Artability Art Show and Sale within the grand, austere, gallery atmosphere of the Great Hall in St. Paul. Writers also contributed their creative work to an anthology available for sale at the show. Artists receive 80 percent of

the proceeds from the sale of their work at the show and 20 percent goes toward Artability programming.

Jill Wiedmann-West, who started as People Incorporated's Chief Operating Officer in 2010 and was later promoted to CEO in 2014, re-envisioned the show from an intimate activity to a life-altering, transcending, large public event along with the help of Barbara Nichols, who sat on the organization's board of directors.

"We wanted to build the show to the next level," Wiedmann-West said. "This is an incredibly important program for our clients and the community. I wanted to see where we could take it. I wanted it to grow in terms of scope, size, number of artists — and impact."

In 2019, its 25th anniversary year, People Incorporated's Artability Art Show and Sale is expanding further, opening its doors to more artists, fun activities and celebratory experiences that honor the creativity and contributions of people living with mental illnesses and the program's rich, awe-inspiring history.

"For anyone who is struggling on a day-to-day basis, living with any kind of pain or illness that makes them feel different than others — art is a great equalizer," Wiedmann-West said. "You see these people at the show who have had a life of struggles and then you see stickers on their art that says it has been purchased. The enthusiasm in the room is just so wonderful."

No one understands the depth of the show's history, its deep impact or its equalizing effect greater than Mike Conroy, who has been involved in every role including Artability artist, show planner, instructor and advisory committee member since 2001. His expressionistic, cityscape paintings, which have become an iconic, popular Artability show staple, have helped him recover from his



own mental health challenges. He also enjoys seeing people consistently come to his workshops because he says they can really learn amazing skills and there is something for everyone. Yet it is the Artability Art Show and Sale where it all comes together.

"The art goes from artist to the show, from the show to the people, and from the people to the world. It's about recovery," Conroy exclaimed.

Melanie, a People Incorporated client added, "If you can present something through a poem or through visual art, and people accept that — then there's mastery being built."

Artability is ultimately about recovery and giving people a purpose in life and something to offer the world. It's about acceptance. It's about the ability to dream big and to choose one's path. It's about reminding people living with a mental illness that the ability to identify as amazing, successful artists is possible. Anything is possible when people and organizations are open to collaboration.

To learn more about People Incorporated's Artability programming, visit: www.peopleincorporated.org/get-involved/artability/.

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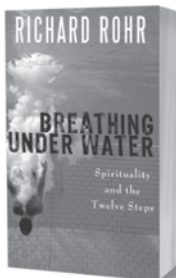
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from page 1

The Insufficiency of Real Love



I worshipped my husband Ken when we first met. He was this tall, athletic guy's guy with a huge smile. He made me feel so desirable. I was on cloud nine when all the women at the office found out that we were dating. Our early romantic life was quite passionate and of course all the ladies wanted to know the juicy details. So of course I left them wondering. Ken and I seemed to have so much in common and I accommodated his many flirtations with other women. I knew none of it was serious. After all I was his main love interest. I just looked the other way and devoted my life to Ken. So of course we rushed into marriage and have been together for 30 years with two grown children and some grandchildren. You can imagine my heartache when I got a letter in the mail with pictures out of the blue letting me know that Ken has a child with another younger woman who is still very much in love with him. I was crushed and shocked beyond belief. I sobbed and sobbed and could not find the words to even face Ken. I'll never forget his look when I finally got up the courage to face him. Naturally he claimed, "It is not what you think." And he couldn't understand why I would so easily believe an unknown woman who was impugning his character. I felt like I was the crazy one until I looked at the picture of his son. I knew it was his. Same blond hair, same big blue eyes and same cleft chin. I was shocked at his unconcern for his son. It slowly dawned on me that I had been living a lie for the last 30 years. This experience could have crushed me but it didn't. After all I was part of the lie just as much as Ken was. Our marriage felt beyond repair due to Ken's continued denial and my alienation from him. I divorced Ken and moved on with the kids and got a favorable divorce settlement. Now I am nowhere near the woman I used to be. This is a good thing.



There's no pleasing Lydia. She is my one and only sister whom I have always looked up to. She is the only family I have. Naturally she was prettier, smarter and more popular than me. If she ever needed something from me I would jump to get it. Once I brought her an expensive broach with a picture of the two of us inside. She replaced the picture with one of herself. She gave me attention mostly to correct the way I dressed, do my hair, or tell me if I was too fat. At least she took an interest in me. But I never measured up to her standards and often felt depressed after our visits. When I was a teen I did improve the way I looked and had some friends of my own. I got attention from the boys. She said that didn't count, as I was just too slutty. What I want most from Lydia today, and probably will never get, is to have her say that she loves me. I don't know what I ever did to her to warrant her contempt. Lydia is now in hospice care. I want to love her but how can I when she treats me so bad?



I've recently lost a beloved daughter who always got the very best from her dad and me. You can imagine getting a call in the middle of the night letting me know that my new college bound amazing daughter just got killed in a tragic car accident after a bout of heavy drinking. She was the type of kid everybody wished

they had as a daughter. She was beautiful, smart, athletic and kind to all. She snuffed out her own life when everything was going so well. There are no words to describe what I feel. If only I had insisted she live closer to home.



Try as we might we can't make somebody else love us or have life turn out exactly as we wished just because we have loved. Even when we give our very best efforts over many years, our love is sometimes insufficient. Most of us struggle with accepting the harsh reality of things we cannot control. Serenity may be impossible to find sometimes. We want to accept that we've done the best we could and yet we wish that we could have done more.

Many of us want nothing to do with the logic behind these scenarios. But let's look at it anyway. The real truth of the matter is that we are not completely responsible for why people cannot love us. Usually we are not loved for reasons that have nothing to do with us. The real reasons for insufficient love likely lie in the people we wish would love us. It may pain us to realize that the world does not revolve around our own failings and that we are not all that important in the bigger picture of the universe. Some of us would like to be all that important but it's folly to think that we are. Let us be humble enough and busy enough with our own failings towards ourselves. That is more than enough work for us to do! Some people are just too scared to accept our love and it is sadly their loss.

HOW TO COPE WITH INSUFFICIENT LOVE

Let's go beyond logic. If you struggle with rejection from someone you care for dearly or have not received the full benefits of loving someone, welcome to the human race. There isn't a person alive that doesn't struggle with unexplainable loss. People generally don't want to talk about such heartache and often do some bad acting to make it look like everything in their life is great. When we see only the good stuff in people's lives we fool ourselves and put ourselves down. If there is one thing I have learned as a counselor for 40 years it is that people are not who they appear to be.

Realize that it is absolutely normal to blame yourself for the loss of a loved one. There is no way out of it. Do it as often and as long as you need to do. It's all part of grief. All that shame and blame is simply a testimony to just how much you really cared for another human being. You're willing to sacrifice yourself in the hope of bringing a loved one back to you. If you could only find the fault that alienated another loved one maybe you could bring that person back with some atonement.

Self-blame gives you a false sense of control when you really have none. Just remember, feelings are not facts. Just because you feel at fault doesn't mean that you really are. The losses in the vignettes above are all examples of profound traumatic loss. They may haunt us to our dying days. They seem more physical than emotional. They cause us intense shame. They make us think in crazy ways. Overall they seem irreparable as if a physical part of us is lost forever. But alas there is hope as I describe below.

First, let's look at what to do if the beloved person is still alive and in your life. If the person you love is still in your life realize you don't have to reject that per-

son. Doing so only hurts yourself more. It's best to limit your contact with that person and express what behaviors you cannot abide. Limit your time together to only positive interactions and leave when you need to (even after 5 minutes). Do not hang on to an abusive person hoping they will change; it is not your job.

THE SILVER LINING IN NOT GETTING WHAT WE ASK FOR

Second, let's look at what to do if your beloved person is completely out of your life. Start by remembering the saying, "God does not give us pain that we cannot handle." Our Higher Power often has bigger plans for us than what we are asking for. Sometimes not getting what we want is a good thing or at least has a silver lining. Such gifts may fall to you only after years of considerable grief. But they will fall to you, if you're willing to receive them. At this point you are not required to receive such gifts or to look for any silver linings. Just let your grief take its course. Don't be alone with this type of suffering. A pastor, a compassionate therapist, a heartfelt friend, a support group of peers or all of the above can work miracles. Have faith that even after the longest time you will find purpose in your suffering, as long as you keep your heart open to possibilities and stay connected to people that actually care about you. Let's return to an earlier story and see how grief transformed suffering.

Things have changed in my life these past 10 years. I still have sad feelings and loss about my children who are absent from my life (believe it or not!). I don't blame myself quite so much. I even feel some pride in what I did for my kids. This all started when I decided to not keep my feelings about my kids a secret. I chose a few select friends to open up to. They believed I was a good mother and have remained steadfast in letting me know what a good friend I am to them. I came out to people at my church about my heartache. Nobody judged me. Over time I decided to believe my friends and distance myself from people who might judge me. Today I am discrete in who I tell my story to. Many people have opened up to me about their traumatic family losses. I do a lot of volunteer work with preschoolers and enjoy it. I am very good with the kids. Best of all, Mother's day now is an opportunity to celebrate all mothers. It is still a sad day for me.



"And even in our sleep pain that cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart, and in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom to us by the awful grace of God."

AESCHYLUS
(Greek playwright, 525-456 BC)

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).

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Bob Ross, the infinitely relaxed host of *The Joy of Painting* famously said, “We don’t make mistakes, we have happy little accidents.”

And I believe Bob.

If you are a musician or performing artist and you live with crushing panic, anxiety, depression, and are paralyzed with fear and self-doubt, I hope you believe Bob too.

Although I am not a full-time musician, I recently released a solo EP and am currently writing and rehearsing for a new album with another band that I play in. I understand the grind, the hustle, and the exhaustion of the music business. There seems to be a never-ending cycle of writing, practicing, recording, releasing albums and performing. And if you are a full-time musician, there is touring, media/press obligations, and financial stress.

Being in a band can be unbelievably rewarding and quite exhausting at the same time. As artists, we can often think too much and allow fear and doubt to sneak into our dreams.

I try hard to practice what I preach about taking care of ourselves as musicians. We need to feel refreshed and energized in order to thrive.

Mark Mallman is a musician from Minneapolis whose mother died in 2013. He then wrote an album called “*The End is Not the End*” with hopes of healing his grief and panic attacks. He also is the author of the soon-to-be-released memoir called “*The Happiness Playlist: The True Story of Healing My Heart With Feel-Good Music*.”

Mallman writes, “Music is my only escape. My heart rate slows a bit. Breathing comes easier. The Happiness Playlist is created.”

Music heals.

Musician Adam Levy (Honeydogs, Sunshine Committee, Bunny Clogs), has been publicly sharing his personal journey of grief and healing. Levy’s son, Daniel, died by suicide in 2013. Levy wrote his album, *Naubinway*, in honor of Daniel, and as a way to heal through his excruciating pain of loss and confusion.

“Ashes to ashes, dust to dust,” Levy writes in the title track, “We’ll bid you adieu if we must. A backwards baptism in Lake Michigan. I cradled my baby on his deathbed. Sleep my beautiful son in the shallows of Naubinway.”

Music heals again.

Last March, I accepted a position to be on the board for Dissonance, a Minnesota non-profit organization that helps musicians, artists and their loved ones to find resources and support for mental health,

wellness and substance use. The Minnesota Music Coalition is another local organization, among others, who helps support our music community to help them feel that they are not alone in the struggles and hardships of the creative life.

Recently, I had the pleasure of meeting with drummer Eric Fawcett (N.E.R.D., Spymob). He wrote an article for *Drummer Magazine* where he said, “the more you get out there, the more you’ll find there’s rarely a challenge you’re not up for. It is when we push ourselves to create outside of our comfort zone that we learn most.”

Pushing ourselves creatively is one of the many pathways to healing. When we try something new and different, such as writing a different style of song, we strengthen our creative muscles. And just like any other muscle in our body, our creative muscles need to workout.

Starting a new music or art project can seem daunting. So when I listen to *Composer’s Datebook* on Minnesota Public Radio, I always love hearing John Zech’s friendly reminder that “all music was once new.” This statement alone can help liberate us from the fear of criticism and from starting a new project.

Of course, there is a chance for failure or disappointment. And there is also

a chance for joy because within those difficult moments of self-doubt lies the magical formula for growth and creating something absolutely unique to you. And that’s part of what art is, isn’t it?

Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson, wisely states in his book, *Creative Quest*, that “creative people take in more than the average person — or, rather, they are less able to shut out parts of their environment. In the modern world, that’s an even more intense problem, because so much information, so many signals, flow across our brains.”

I could not agree with him more and know that it is important for Highly Sensitive Persons to be aware of the negative energy we can potentially absorb. Consistent self-care practices and strong, healthy boundaries can help us maintain our energy for creativity.

Speaking of energy, our 26th President, Theodore Roosevelt, emphatically exclaimed, “Comparison is the thief of joy.” With technology and social media readily available in our pockets, we habitually destroy our self-worth and drain our creative energy by comparing ourselves to everyone else.

Taking a social media break is one simple antidote to the poison of comparisons.

Musician Maya Elena recently remarked, “I love JOMO (the joy of missing out) because it helps me focus on my mu-

sic and songwriting. It blocks out negativity and what everyone else is doing.”

In the music world, comparing ourselves to someone else is one of the most harmful and destructive things we can do. It serves no purpose and steers us off course. We need to block out all distractions, especially self-criticism, so we can continue to create music.

If you are a musician or artist, your own self-care must be priority. Self-care is not selfish. Without practice, you will burn out quickly and possibly lose your passion for music.

Even the Federal Aviation Administration recommends you put on your oxygen mask first, before attempting to help anyone else.

I hope you continue to make music or have other creative endeavors and that you thrive, grow, and inspire the next magical generation.

Brian Zirngible is a Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist with a solo private practice in Burnsville. He specializes in helping performing artists, highly sensitive men, couples and older teenage males find hope and passion within themselves and through creativity. Learn more about Brian at www.brianzirngible.com.

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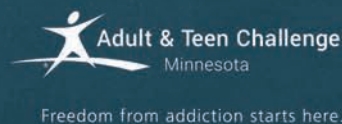
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Art Heals

by *Mary Lou Logsdon*



I am not surprised that healing and art are connected. I know the calm I feel as I play piano or focus on a favorite painting or indulge in a luscious piece of poetry. Art is an oasis in the hurry of my life, whether it is my art or someone else's.

Healing is soul work. Our wounds cry out for healing and light. The slow work of healing is a process of making whole, but it does not necessarily return us to what was. Nor is it the same as cure.

People treated for cancer endure chemotherapy and radiation to eradicate dangerous cells. At the end of their treatment they may be cancer free, yet the healing goes on — not just healing from cancer, but also healing from chemotherapy, the shock of the diagnosis and the interruption of life as we have come to expect it. Healing goes on long after the cure happens. Healing also continues when the cure fails.

Even with the so-called common cold, we are contagious with the acute part of the virus for only a short time, but symptoms linger days or even weeks longer. While healing may rebuild what was lost, often it is about finding new ways of being.

Why and how can art be a part of that process?

One way art aids healing is by slowing me down. That is true for both creating something and enjoying art made by another. For instance, look at the visual arts. It takes time to create something. All the while I am drawing or painting or quilting, my mind is focused. I am present and in the moment, less distracted by fear or restlessness. Healing happens in the here and now.

Ansel Adams lugged his cumbersome camera equipment up mountain paths to wait hours for the perfect arrangement of light, moon, and emptiness before he pressed the button.

Local poet Robert Bly speaks of drafting a poem and waiting for the right phrase, line, or word to make itself known. It can take weeks or longer. The poem will not be rushed.

Observing art takes time and attention as well. It's hard to race through a museum, a poem or a play. While we might fast-forward through a website, a Netflix film, or the daily newspaper, it is much harder to fast-forward through an experience. Walking into a museum, my steps automatically slow as I study an abstract painting, circle a life-like sculpture, or admire a hand woven tapestry.

The healing process for the artist overflows to us as participants. We connect with something larger.

Minnesota photographer Jim Brandenburg challenged himself with a daily single picture during the 90 days he followed autumn from its equinox to the winter solstice. He called it a "haiku on film." He describes it as a "personal struggle, a project designed to restore my soul." It was a transition time for him, moving from an adventurous life as a National Geographic photographer back to his rural Minnesota home. While not always pleased with each individual picture, the disciplined undertaking helped him find his way through his transition. "The irritating and relentless light in the rearview mirror became an illuminating pathfinder in front of me."

Art does not have to be excellent to heal. It is the process, not the result that matters. Many have found the book version of Brandenburg's experience, *Chased by the Light*, to be part of their own healing journey from summer into winter.

Beloved poet Mary Oliver, who died this last January, described her work in the world as this: pay attention, be astonished, talk about it. For her, the natural world was a place of healing and refuge from deep childhood wounds. It was out of that difficult experience she created heart-opening poetry that offers counsel to us, her wounded readers.

Recovering from my own surgery, I decided to write a poem each of my first seven days home. I wanted to capture how I felt. Many feelings are ephemeral. They last a while, then lift. Most feelings pass through us. Now, as I read those poems, I remember how I felt. I relive those memories. I am reminded of where I was and can contrast it to where I am now. I see it anew.

My own art — whatever form it takes — focuses on my feelings in this time and place. When I engage with another's art, I experience how they may have felt and how their feelings echo mine. Robert Frost's "*The Road Not Taken*" leads me to reflect on my own decisions — which road did I take? What difference did it make? I imagine his road into poetry, or recall a friend's challenging road, or picture the dilemma of someone I admire. I experience the universal, the every-one's story. I am connected to something bigger than me.

Deep wounds need art's deep cleansing.

Not all feelings pass quickly. Feelings seared with trauma are carried in our bodies, relived when triggers fire up old memories. Melissa Walker, in her TED Talk "*How Art Heals PTSD's Invisible Wounds*," says that art bypasses the speech part of the brain and engages the feelings — where our trauma lies.

She works with veterans whose trauma invades their life as flashbacks and night terrors. She offers drawing, painting, collage and mask making. The masks are the most likely to break through the trauma by bringing the terrorizing feelings out of the body and into the mask. Those masks carry vivid images. Menacing white eyes protrude from a dark green army face. Flames of fire spill out of a horned mask. Barbed wire wraps a blue and red face with a padlocked mouth. Beauty is not the point.

The Mayo Clinic recognizes the connection between healing and the arts. Their Center for Humanities in Medicine works to enrich the human spirit and enhance the healing process for patients. Via their website I see examples of art spread throughout their Rochester campus. Thirteen Chihuly blown glass sculptures hang from the ceiling. A large Calder mobile floats over a sitting area. Paintings, mosaics, and sculptures are spread about. The campus has 22 pianos available for guests to play. Doctors find that patients who listen to pleasing music need less pain medication, have improved mood and reduced apprehension.

We need art. We need it to slow us down, connect us with something larger, enliven our spirits. We need it to wash "from the soul the dust of everyday life," per Pablo Picasso. It takes us places where ordinary words fail. "If I could say it in words there would be no reason to paint," Edward Hopper said. It is a welcome oasis for the weary and wounded.

Mary Lou Logsdon, is a Spiritual Director and Retreat Leader in the Twin Cities. She can be reached at logson.marylou@gmail.com.



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