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Recovery, Renewal and Growth

The Phoenix Spirit

January February 2026

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WHAT'S INSIDE

WALKING THE RECOVERY ROAD

His Sobriety Drives Him to Help Others

*by **Angelo Gentile** / Photos by **Tracy Walsh***

Jason Lennox and his fundraising efforts on behalf of mental health and addiction treatment programs were well documented last fall by several local news outlets.

The Southern Minnesota native, who now lives in Hopkins, walked 15 to 25 miles every day, starting in late September and continuing through October. His 307-mile trek through Appalachia from Williamson, West Virginia to Nashville, Tennessee, helped raise money for Recovery Road, a fundraising and awareness campaign he founded this past year.

As he told WCCO-TV last fall, 307,000 is the number of "people we lost in our country alone (in 2024) to drugs, alcohol and suicide." Lennox specifically chose the West Virginia and Tennessee region for his walk, which has been hit particularly hard by these challenges. West Virginia reportedly has the highest overdose mortality rate in the United States. As he told several TV reporters in that region, he walked in memory of lives lost and for those still fighting alcohol and drug addiction and mental health disorders.

Beyond Lennox walking his route, the campaign included others who volunteered to walk on their own wherever they lived, signed up donors to sponsor their miles, and then logged their miles online.

The mission of the campaign was to raise $307,000 to support various mental health, treatment and addiction organizations and programs. The event raised about $50,000, Lennox said.

Lennox's day job also supports behavioral health care. He is the founder

HIS SOBRIETY DRIVES HIM *to pg 6*

SPOTLIGHT ON RECOVERY

How Anoka County is Addressing the Opioid Crisis

The faces behind opioid addiction are not always what you might expect. "People were saying 'Opioids aren't an issue here. That's something that happens over *there*. That happens *down in the city*. That happens to *those* people," said Patti Constant, Senior Program Manager of the Anoka County Opioid Solutions Initiative (ACOSI)

Read more on page 4

JOHN H. DRIGGS

Self-Deception: When Who You Are Is Not Who You Really Are

Most of us are more easily fooled than we think we are. If a stranded motorist knocks on our door and asks us to use our phone, we generally let them in. If an attractive person compliments us on our new appearance, we generally believe him or her. If someone offers to help us do an unpleasant chore, we believe they are doing so just to be nice. It's not until later that we find out our wallet is missing, that someone else's boyfriend wants to knock our block off or that our boss who helped us move is now expecting us to work weekends. What looks good on the surface has a whole new meaning. Most of us are far more gullible than we care to know, especially when we're in the hands of a real con artist.

And what if that con artist is really our self? So many of us have distorted notions of who we think we are. We either give ourselves more credit than we deserve, woefully underestimate our true strengths, or simply deny what is so obvious to everybody else. Although it can be fun to live in a la-la land for a while, the devastation of not knowing the truths about ourselves can be a bitter pill to swallow. One only has to look at recent financial crisis in our country, where so many people got fooled and fooled themselves, to know what I mean. In fact, I think deluding ourselves hurts us more than other people's conning. You can always get away from a con artist but you are stuck with being yourself, with all its limitations. Chronic self-deception devastates us.

—

I used to think of myself as a confident guy. I came from a poor and backwoods Georgie family, worked hard on autos and put two and two together in dealing with people. Eventually I owned my own garage here in Biloxi, Mississippi. One day this gorgeous southern belle-Joleen-asked me to work on her car. She kept coming by the shop and showing me all this attention. I thought I had died and gone to heaven, particularly since our flirtation appeared to be more than just sex. I asked myself, "Why is such a classy lady showing me all this attention?" Finally, I said to myself, "Look this woman is obviously not interested in you for your money. You're a

JOHN DRIGGS *to pg 10*

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Beauty in the Mundane

by ***Sharon Chapman***

"I have always tried to live by the 'awe principle.' That is: Can I find awe, wonder and enchantment in the most mundane things conceivable?"
CRAIG HATKOFF

Harry (Editor's dog) / Photo by Sharon Chapman

When I was traveling this past fall on my cross-country road trip, it seemed like a lot of my days were consumed solely with the mundane acts of living: Had I had enough to eat? What had I eaten? Was I sufficiently rested? Where was I sleeping tonight?

Although I was a little frustrated by these "mundane" tasks I had to consciously think about *every* day, more so than when I was at home, it struck me that these tasks were actually the *most important* tasks of the day. Without proper rest, I wouldn't have been able to drive safely each day. Without a clean and safe place to spend the night, I would be exhausted and irritable. And without proper nutrition, I would be unable to function properly and take care of myself.

Consciously, being forced to think a little more about my needs each day, actually made me appreciate the basic things that I take for granted when I *unconsciously* do them each day. And perhaps I needed this reminder. Subsequently, when I got home, I started taking an additional 15-minutes out of my day in the late afternoon to walk my dog again—in addition to his longer morning walk—and connect with the outside world. Needless to say, he was delighted!

Just this evening, he tried to interact with a holiday Santa who was moving and waving electronically as we walked by, not understanding that it wasn't a "real" person. It was cute to watch, as he wagged his tail, but he didn't give it another thought when we finally moved along. He wasn't frustrated or annoyed. He just started sniffing out something else of interest to him on the walk. And it was this little thing that made me appreciate the "healthiness" of that additional 15-minutes outside.

Beautiful moments often happen when we are doing something "mundane."

Given that dogs live a lot shorter lives than humans, perhaps we should take a leaf out of their book, once in a while, and be awed by the mundane. After all, beautiful moments often happen when we are doing something "mundane."

Turn the mundane into a "healthy beautiful" this coming year,

Sharon

The Phoenix Spirit

RECOVERY • RENEWAL • GROWTH

PUBLISHERS **Aaron and Jen Shepherd**
phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com

EDITOR / WRITER **Sharon Chapman**
phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com

SALES DIRECTOR **David Goldstein**
ads@thephoenixspirit.com

COMMUNITY RELATIONS **Jen Shepherd**
phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS **John H. Driggs**
Angelo Gentile
Mary Lou Logsdon
Mark Scannell

ADVISOR **Mike Engen**

DISTRIBUTOR **Metro Periodicals**

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Every trial, and 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 Spirit 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.

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Resource Directory

Eating Disorders

Melrose Center
Melrose's experienced team provides specialized care for those struggling with an eating disorder and substance use disorder – whether currently in treatment or recovery. Melrose Center has five Twin City metro locations. Visit melroseheals.com or call 952-993-6200.

Substance Use Disorders

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

Online Resource

AMERICAN REHAB .org
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To be included in the Resource Directory, reach out to David at ads@thephoenixspirit.com.

FIRST PERSON

Mud Pies

by ***Dorothy P.***

While dad was working, Martha, my mother, took my brother Sam and I from our Kansas City home to visit my grandparents in Detroit. Martha told us that Billy Lee would follow along to meet us, but he did not. Once at Charles' and Bella's Scottish household, my ardent unraveling began. It disoriented me and internal suffering became my shadowy lifestyle. That summer, a childhood friendship briefly disengaged my despair. A friendship sparked by dirt.

Billy Lee greeted me with his smile and muscular arms at the front door of our home every afternoon when he arrived from his shop. He was tall with large square shoulders. Motor oil and gasoline were his cologne. Enamored with my dad's scent and his squared-off hair, he calmed my little girl spirit. He was my gentle prince. Taken up into his arms every day, I felt secure. I do not remember my mother touching me nor giving me much notice.

Musing of his strong, scooping arms and his auto shop cologne, I pondered my dad every day throughout my childhood. When I was six years old, he sent me a set of Winne-the-Pooh books and his portrait. I gazed at his warm smile and heard his soft, deep voice as I read. They salved my incessant grief and diminished my loss as I meandered into sleep.

Aimless summer days in my grandparents' backyard were interceded by a glance over the fence.

"I live across the street. Would you like to come over?" "Sure," I said. I needed a distraction from the growing grief in my gut.

Amelia's house faced my grandparents' blue trimmed stucco home. When the weather was favorable, she spent her days in her garden pretending she was a beautiful sought-after socialite, the talk of Detroit. She tried to enlist me into her fantasy night life of sparkly affairs, but I was loyally committed to girlish remembrances of my loving father.

Amelia enjoyed my company because I was her wing girl in attendance at her social amusements. She longed for society, silk dresses, and chauffeurs. She was filled with womanly fantasies of glamorous society life and attentive bachelors. I was seeking a fanciful distraction from confused thoughts and a torn heart that had lost Billy Lee.

Her mom allowed Amelia access to her refrigerator and beverage pitchers. We mixed frozen lemonade with icy water and created our cocktails. Once the liquid was prepared, we set the pitcher and tumblers on the family picnic table. Next to the table was an area of bare soil near the garden hose. On the adjacent grass we arranged short wooden planks as baking sheets.

My grandma's somber meals were composed of mealy puddin' sausage, and heavily salted boiled potatoes, with occasional canned string beans. Sam and I lamented the savory hot dog and macaroni and cheese dinners that my mother cooked back home. Here she was busy working and could not take time to cook, so Sam and I suffered in silence. My grandfather's preferences ruled their home, and we knew complaints would have brought his ire upon us, so we kept the secret to ourselves.

Grandma's bland menu matched the dullness and desolation in my abdomen and the dry loneliness in my chest. My mother Martha had an efficient personality with a functional worldview, and my casual, imaginative, and free-spirited personality annoyed her. With our cocktail parties, I could soften the injury to my spirit by imagining dad's love and comforting presence. There, I found a festive escape from the culinary dreariness of Bella's carte du jour, Charlie's somber home, and conflicts with mom.

We prepared our appetizers with water from the garden hose and the soil next to the picnic table. Mixing them with our hands in her mom's old, red cooking pot, we crafted our dough. When the consistency was exactly right, we scooped up handfuls of mud and gingerly placed them on the wooden planks, patting them down into various shapes that complemented that day's party theme. The midday sun was our oven.

Amelia preferred to eat her mud pies daintily with her polished fingers. She used her mother's spatula and lifted the dried mud up from the boards. With soft background music, she sat at the table imagining her suitors, as her red lipstick carefully consumed the reconstituted dirt. She swallowed the cocktail and appetizers with a self-satisfied smile. I preferred to slowly sip my cocktail, eat my mud pie, finish my drink and then lie down in the grass. All of my enjoyment came from gazing at clouds dancing in the sky, while I heard and felt my racing heart pound as the dirt took hold within me. Then I felt Billy Lee calming me, and telling me, "I love you, DJ."

I left my grandparents' home soon after that summer friendship. It was time for me to begin kindergarten, and mom had found another husband to marry. Amelia's creative game restrained my immediate devastation, and the mud spoke to my grief-stricken chest, keeping Billy Lee's gentle memory alive. Yet, the mud never gave healing balm to my wounded abdomen, and once in our new home, with mom's new husband and children, my curious animated relationship with foods began. In my desolated abdomen, an emotional tumor had taken hold, and it needed quantities of food to soothe its grief and spiritual barrenness.

Martha's silent distance that isolated her from her children's love confused and disoriented me until I grew into middle age. I lacked parenting; therefore, I needed food to comfort my emotions and calm my spirit. Now, with the help of Overeaters Anonymous, I am learning to love myself and live freely.

Dorothy P. *began her journey with overeating before she began school at age five. She is a member of Overeaters Anonymous. Please send your 1st Person articles to phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com to be considered for a future issue.*

SPOTLIGHT ON RECOVERY

Putting Faces to Hope: How Anoka County is Addressing the Opioid Crisis

by ***Sharon Chapman***

Photo provided by Anoka County

The faces behind opioid addiction are not always what you might expect. "People were saying 'Opioids aren't an issue here. That's something that happens over *there*. That happens *down in the city*. That happens to those people," Patti Constant, Senior Program Manager of the Anoka County Opioid Solutions Initiative (ACOSI) told me in a recent interview with *The Phoenix Spirit.* In reality, the truth can often be uncomfortably close to home and perhaps lead to life-threatening circumstances. "This could be an elderly relative who forgets how much of their opioid pain medication they have taken," Patti states—which is why life-saving naloxone was one of the first steps in how Anoka County addressed the opioid problem. The second step was to make sure that people had access to the resources that they needed to help them start the road to recovery.

But how do you do that without having them tune out within the first five minutes of a lecture? "People listen to stories," Patti explained. "They are not going to hear me lecturing, they are not going to hear me telling them facts and statistics… they are going to remember the story of [someone] who went through this."

This is how *Faces of Hope* emerged, a documentary which tells the story of *real* people who have *lived* the story—their own personal journeys. And this sobering truth was apparent to me when I visited the *Faces of Hope* website. I was immediately drawn in by the rawness, the *truth*, but also the hope from those telling their stories, no matter how the story had ended. So, how did this particular story begin?

THE BEGINNING OF THE STORY

Patti was hired by Anoka County in October 2023 with a mission to look at what was happening in the county (with opioids) and how to utilize the nationwide opioid settlement that they had received. What would be the most significant impact on the community to reduce opioid misuse, overdoses and opioid-related deaths?

Patti said, "I equate it to building the foundation of a house. We wanted to utilize our community partners (our strong base) and work collaboratively with them in a number of ways…We want to get funding out into the community to help support the efforts of what they are doing."

The first task was to address naloxone education and distribution, an area which is more easily quantified. "We can say we started with five naloxone access points and now we have almost thirty." Patti summarized. "We can say people didn't know or have options for where to get it and now we can provide numbers."

And this is no small achievement; according to *The Faces of Hope* website, "Naloxone can reverse an opioid overdose and save a life." Think about the elderly relative who mistakenly took too much opioid pain medication, and you can understand why both the knowledge and resources *can* save a life.

BUILDING ON THE BEGINNING

But having access to naloxone is only part of the story. Prevention is usually better than cure in many instances. Getting people to understand about prevention doesn't get more personal than a documentary about people who've actually lived the experience.

The documentary *Faces of Hope* came out of a call for a community-based Request for Proposal (RFP) in searching for an effective way to teach people about prevention of opioid misuse.

"I really wanted to find a way to say, 'This can happen to absolutely anybody… this can happen to anyone, anywhere,'" Patti explained. "We want everyone to have the knowledge of the impact that it can have in our community and that it could be their neighbor, their grandparent, their husband, their sister, their daughter. We want everyone to have at least the base level of knowledge."

As I listened to some of the stories on the *Faces of Hope* website, it was apparent that this documentary met those goals. Stories such as those of Amy Jones, mother of Chance Lundgren, who tragically died of an overdose: "He was about 19 when he called me and said he was using fentanyl. It was the worst nightmare imagined coming true." Amy shares her story, as hard as it is "to be sure people hear that message because it's a way that she can continue to share his fight and struggle," Patti told me. "Hopefully that will be one less parent who has to go through what they have gone though."

"If we could start treating substance use like we treat a disease or disorder like diabetes, our community would be much better served. But to do that people have to be able to talk about it and they have to talk about it in a respectful way and in a way that shares that 'there is hope.'" Patti commented. "And not with this veil of not being able to speak freely or to think that it's some shame-ridden thing. I really wanted to share the idea, the difference, that community can make…the resources, and the idea of hope was really important."

THE NEXT CHAPTER

Patti's vision to share people's stories through the *Faces of Hope* documentary was just realized; the website had its soft launch in November 2025. And it has already seen 1.2K visits without any major marketing. Its official community screening is on February 3rd, 2026 at 6:30pm, at the Lyric Arts Theater in downtown Anoka. The full documentary is 23 minutes long, although individual stories, at just a few minutes long each, are available on the *Faces of Hope* website. Patti explained why they had broken the documentary up this way: "Our hope is that people in different support groups, schools, or youth-based programs would be able to use those as little talking points and starting points."

People who attend the community screening event will also have access to a community panel discussion and be able to ask questions, as well as learning more about the efforts of the project.

If you can't attend the event, you can still access the *Faces of Hope* documentary online, as well as finding resources on how to use and access naloxone, and the growing number of resources being added to the website. The resources page helps "people to understand that there is not one set path [to recovery.] It's taking one step forward in a meaningful way," Patti adds. Different options might resonate with different people, including the Anoka County Recovery Café, the Substance Use Navigator, and Canvas Health (24-hour support).

TRAINING OPPORTUNITY

In the summer of 2026, medical training will be available for providers who prescribe opioid medication. An 8-hour course in medical education training modules (available as CEs) is currently being created, which will be story-based (like the *Faces of Hope* documentary) and written at a lay person's level. Patti explains: "This will help them [medical providers] understand what the things are to look for when you are prescribing [opioids], what things you should know, communicate, and what some of the risks may be."

> *The more that they can see something that resonates with them or their situation, the more likely that they will find their path [to recovery].*

How needed are people's own stories of hope? "Every time a story of hope gets out there that can hopefully create something that somebody else can resonate with and that could maybe make the difference." Patti confirms. "The more that they can see something that resonates with them or their situation, the more likely that they will find their path [to recovery]."

If you have a story of hope of your own to tell around opioid addiction, you are invited to submit it via the *Faces of Hope* website here (scroll to the foot of the page and complete the form): https://www.facesofhopeanoka.org/stories

To learn more about the *Faces of Hope* documentary visit: https://www.facesofhopeanoka.org/stories. You can also contact the Anoka County Opioid Solutions Initiative (ACOSI) via email at opioids@anokacountymn.gov.

Sharon Chapman *is a published author and editor with over seventeen years' experience. Learn more about her freelance writing, editing, and publishing services https://thephoenixspirit.com/go/sharon*

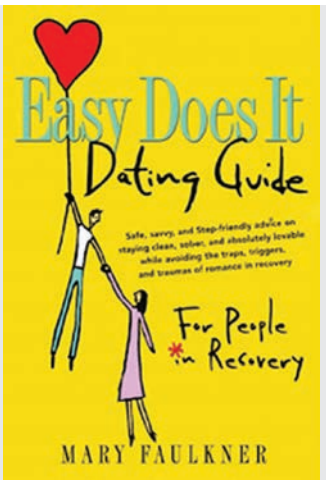
Books

Recovery: Freedom from Our Addictions

By Russell Brand
HOLT PAPERBACKS

With a rare mix of honesty, humor, and compassion, comedian and movie star Russell Brand mines his own wild story and shares the wisdom he has gained through his fourteen years of recovery. Brand speaks to those suffering along the full spectrum of addiction—from drugs, alcohol, caffeine, and sugar addictions to addictions to work, stress, bad relationships, digital media, and fame. Addiction can take many shapes and sizes, and staying clean, sane, and unhooked is a daily process. The question is not "Why are you addicted?" but "What pain is your addiction masking?"

Russell has been in all the twelve-step fellowships going, he's started his own men's group, he's a therapy regular and a practiced yogi—and while he's worked on this material as part of his comedy and previous bestsellers, he's never before shared the tools that really took him out of it, that keep him clean and clear. Here he provides not only a recovery plan, but an attempt to make sense of the ailing world.



Easy Does It Dating Guide

For People in Recovery

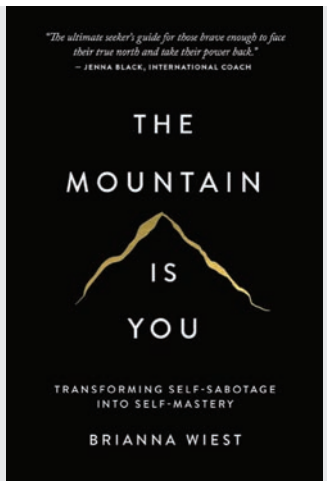
By Mary Faulkner
HAZELDEN PUBLISHING

A straightforward, yet lighthearted, look at what it takes to enter or reenter the world of dating—clean and sober style.

How much of your past should you share? Is it wise to date another addict in recovery? What should you do if you're attracted to a problem drinker? These are important questions in any dating relationship, but even more critical for individuals who are in recovery. This Step-friendly, one-of-a-kind dating guide offers frank yet lighthearted advice about avoiding the traps, triggers, and trauma of romance in recovery.

EXCERPT

"Dating in recovery has been compared to playing football without gear, running barefoot over sharp rocks, and having dental work without the benefit of painkillers. It can be the great escape, bounce you back into relapse, or trigger a new addiction"



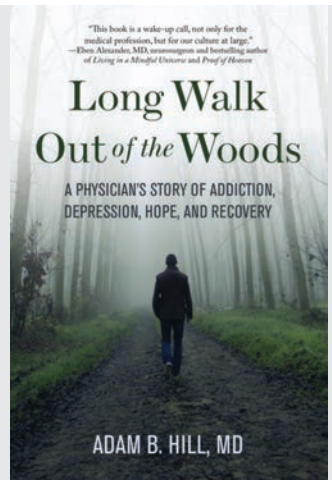
The Mountain Is You

Transforming Self-Sabotage Into Self-Mastery

By Brianna Wiestt
NORTH ATLANTIC BOOKS

This is a book about self-sabotage. Why we do it, when we do it, and how to stop doing it—for good. Coexisting but conflicting needs create self-sabotaging behaviors. This is why we resist efforts to change, often until they feel completely futile. But by extracting crucial insight from our most damaging habits, building emotional intelligence by better understanding our brains and bodies, releasing past experiences at a cellular level, and learning to act as our highest potential future selves, we can step out of our own way and into our potential. For centuries, the mountain has been used as a metaphor for the big challenges we face, especially ones that seem impossible to overcome. To scale our mountains, we actually have to do the deep internal work of excavating trauma, building resilience, and adjusting how we show up for the climb. In the end, it is not the mountain we master, but ourselves.

Brianna is the bestselling author of the books *101 Essays That Will Change The Way You Think*, *The Mountain Is You*, *The Pivot Year*, and more. Her books have sold millions of copies, regularly appear on global bestseller lists, and are currently being translated into 40+ languages. She has a B.A. in English and an Honorary Doctorate in Literature, both from Elizabethtown College.



Long Walk Out of the Woods

A Physician's Story of Addiction, Depression, Hope, and Recovery

By Adam B. Hill
SELF-PUBLISHED

A physician shares the darkest depths of his depression, suicidal ideation, addiction, and the important lessons he learned through years of personal recovery.

Pediatric oncologist and palliative care physician Dr. Adam B. Hill suffered despair and disillusionment with the culture of medicine, culminating in a spiral of depression, alcoholism, and an active suicidal plan. Then while in recovery from active addiction, he lost a colleague to suicide, further revealing the extent of the secrecy and broken systems contributing to an epidemic of professional distress within the medical field.

By sharing his harrowing story, Dr. Hill helps identify the barriers and obstacles standing in the way of mental health recovery, while pleading for a revolutionary new approach to how we treat individuals in substance use recovery. In fighting stereotypes/stigma and teaching vulnerability, compassion, and empathy, Hill's work is being lauded as a road map for better practices at a time when medical professionals around the world are struggling in silence.

from page 1

of One Arrow Group, a consulting business that specializes in advising treatment centers and other related entities on the administrative aspects of operating these organizations, helping groups navigate insurance, licensing, compliance and other issues In addition, as One Arrow Group states in a press release, the consultancy advises organizations on how to "effectively retool their revenue and financial positions … manage funds and reclaim debt … putting money back into services that help communities thrive."

In less than two years, One Arrow Group is flourishing. Lennox said it already works with more than 25 different organizations and employs about 15 staff. The One Arrow Foundation, a separate, non-profit arm of the business, distributes the funds raised by the Recovery Road campaign.

Beyond the campaign and his consulting business, Lennox is a speaker and author of the book *A Perfect Tragedy.*

But before his business success, his creation of the Recovery Road campaign and his speaking and writing, Lennox struggled with addiction. Now aged 39 and sober for more than 15 years, he had his own personal recovery road to travel. That journey especially motivates his work these days to help others.

"I had left that intervention not saying good things, and I never saw her again, so that news of her passing was a crusher. So, I finally decided, I was either going to run out of there [the treatment center] or try to do this different life for her and try to make some kind of amends."

WALKING HIS OWN RECOVERY ROAD

Southern Minnesota's scenic terrain includes rolling hills and fertile farm land and is dotted with various small cities such as Owatonna, Claremont, Waseca, and Albert Lea. These cities, and a few others, were where Lennox grew up and, as early as 12 years old, started drinking, drugging, smoking, and getting into trouble. Indeed, these rolling hills and farmlands of Lennox's youth soon gave way to more interior, dismal scenes for him, especially the inside of Steele County jail cells.

"By the time I was a senior in high school, I was in and out of jail," Lennox recalled in a recent interview with *The Phoenix Spirit.* "I was living on the streets, homeless, lost my father a year before, he died of cirrhosis of the liver, alcohol poisoning … his dad, my grandfather, who is actually still alive somehow, also has cirrhosis of the liver." In other words, the apple didn't fall far from the tree.

By his early 20s, he had "done a four- or five-year run" of DUIs, disorderly conduct, property damage, and, eventually, faced a felony drug charge for possession.

At age 24 and still using, he was working at a group home in Owatonna, taking care of four older men. One night he overdosed. "I just had done too many drugs," Lennox said. "Mixing drinking, prescription medications, you know, just trying to even myself out." That overdose landed him first in the hospital in Owatonna, and then in jail because of outstanding warrants.

He remembered "going through withdrawals, convulsing … I was suicidal at that point," Lennox said. The day of the overdose was December 8th, 2010. The next day "absolutely felt like the worst day of my life." That was December 9th, which Lennox now recognizes as his sobriety date.

He ended up in treatment, and just a week into his recovery, his grandmother died. He was close to his grandmother at one time, and she had once hosted an intervention, which turned out to be unsuccessful. "I had left that intervention not saying good things, and I never saw her again, so that news of her passing was a crusher. So, I finally decided, I was either going to run out of there [the treatment center] or try to do this different life for her and try to make some kind of amends."

He completed treatment and slowly started recovery, including attending 90 meetings in 90 days, though he remembers with a smile that he probably attended more meetings than that, "Heck, I was doing 14 or 15 meetings a week."

He also completed his probation requirements, which then cleared the felony drug charge from his record. He worked various jobs and eventually entered college, graduating in 2016 with a bachelor's degree in business management from what is now known as Minnesota State University-Mankato.

Lennox found his niche working on the administrative side of behavioral health, working for several years for various large health care systems. These jobs eventually led to independent consulting and, most recently, the formation of One Arrow Group.

Photo opposite page: *Jason Lennox photographed in December.* ***Photo above:*** *Lennox (Photos by Tracy Walsh / www.tracywalshphoto.com)*

GAINING INTEREST IN OUR FELLOWS

As those in recovery know, the Big Book's Chapter 5 covers How it Works: "Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now."

Lennox said he used to be miserable and addicted, referencing again how he chased that phantom feeling of "just trying to even myself out." And what happened? Well, he overdosed, which led to hospitalization and then jail. Followed, thankfully, by treatment.

And what is he like now? As mentioned, these days, Lennox leads One Arrow Group, has launched the Recovery Road campaign, and continues to be a speaker on various recovery topics, including telling his own story. He and other organizers plan to do another Recovery Road walk event next fall in Minnesota.

"I just think Jason is a superstar," said Jeanne Stafford, a New York-based leadership coach, speaker and author. Lennox is one of her clients. Of his consulting work, Stafford said, "He is a revenue recovery expert … where there is inefficiency, Jason's work produces efficiency, putting money back into the economy through the work he does." She also has high praise for his work as a speaker: "The world is a better place when he has more stages to speak on and more conversations to facilitate."

Luke Wendlandt agreed: "I've never seen somebody so dedicated to their personal mission, period," said Wendlandt, CEO of Cadre, a technology-based social platform for mental health and wellness based in the Twin Cities. Wendlandt walked with Lennox last fall on the route from West Virginia to Nashville. Lennox serves on Cadre's advisory board. He added, "In an industry that changed his life, he's working to change the lives of many," through his consulting, speaking and his Recovery Road campaign. Wendlandt finished with:"He's very passionate about the recovery space … and he believes making an impact for other individuals is the paramount of his life success."

Lennox's work seems to be fulfilling one of the Big Book's promises: "We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows." As Lennox explained, "I've had this experience, I have this life now, I've been given this gift of sobriety. So, it's not about me anymore, I need to get out there and help other people get back into this world."

Angelo Gentile *is a Minneapolis-based freelance journalist..*

Learn more

One Arrow Group
www.onearrowgroup.com

The Recovery Road
www.onearrowgroup.com/the-recovery-road

GAMBLING HOTLINE
1-800-333-4673
OR TEXT "HOPE" TO
53342

THE 12 STEP CORNER

Step 4

by ***Mark Scannell***

"Made a searching and HONEST inventory of ourselves."

Step 3 introduces us to an important action in recovery – "made a decision." As I have practiced taking inventory of my life (both in Step 4 and I Step 10), I have always experienced some anxiety, fear and trepidation over what I both did and didn't do. As a result, I have changed the traditional wording of this Step – "fearless" – to "honest." I have to be honest in taking inventory of my life.

Also, a metaphor came to me from my experiences in business when I was an HR person for a manufacturer rep company in plumbing. The metaphor? What came was a balance sheet. A balance sheet consists of taking into account both assets and liabilities. My sense, then, is in taking our inventories, we take into account our assets – the good we have done – as well as the liabilities – our mistakes and errors. And remember – "no one of us is perfect!"

Mark Scannell *is an avid 12 Stepper, has been working the Steps for over 30 years and sees them as foundational for a healthy and sane life. He recently authored a book on the 12 Steps: Affirm & Nurture: A New Look at 12 Steps.*

CRISIS TEXT LINE
TEXT "MN" TO
741741

THE BENEFITS OF PROPER NUTRITION IN RECOVERY

Ask the Expert

Danielle Baker
LMFT

Danielle is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and board-approved supervisor, with over 10 years of experience providing psychotherapy to teens, adults, couples, and families. She is the owner and operator of D. Baker Therapy. Specializing in eating disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and relationship issues, her therapy practice strives to help you improve your quality of life. Danielle earned her bachelor's degree in Dietetics and Nutritional Science from The College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University and her master's degree in Marriage and Family Therapy from Saint Mary's University of Minnesota. Learn more at www.dbakertherapy.com.

Q What first drew you to combine nutrition and mental health in your work?

I started out in a college undergraduate program as a dietetics and nutritional science major with a heavier focus/interest initially in nutrition. I grew up as an athlete and always worked around sports and athletes during college as well. The more experience I gained, the more interested I was in the mental health aspect of sports and athletics. I ended up taking a job at a mental health assisted living facility as a nutrition provider and, in the process, began learning more about the integration of nutrition with mental health in a new setting. This sparked my interest in going to graduate school to become a therapist. I always had a broader scope systems world view, which led me to a marriage and family therapy program at St. Mary's. I continued working full time with the assisted living facility while completing my graduate degree. I then went on to additional training at The Emily Program as an eating disorder therapist in all higher levels of care as well as outpatient services. Once fully licensed, I moved on to work for 7 years at the Melrose Center in inpatient and partial care settings as an eating disorder therapist. I now run a small private practice that includes registered dietitians to help support clients with both mental health and nutritional concerns.

Q Why is proper nutrition especially important for individuals in recovery from substance use disorders, particularly in the early stages of sobriety?

Nutrition is a necessary quality for our brain and body to thrive. Consistent and adequate nutrition can help manage emotional urges, cravings, etc. but can also be a way to share support with others as well. Our brains change when exposed over time to certain chemicals or substances and nutrition can be a way to work on combating the effects of this on our brain and body. These transition experiences can also be very stressful for people emotionally and physically; healthy and adequate nutrition can reduce some of those challenges. Nutrition can also become a way for people who have struggled to treat their body well in the past to find a new way to honor and treat their body well. Feeding our body and brain well can be a way to care for it!

Q How does nutrition impact mood, anxiety, and emotional regulation?

Nutrition can have a strong impact on how people feel and interact within themselves and with others in their world. Lack of adequate nutrition can cause difficulties with emotion regulation and mood. Have you ever been around someone who is 'hangry'?! When our bodies are not nourished properly we can become grouchy and irritable!

Q What are some common nutrition-related challenges you see in people who are in recovery?

With my career experience working in the eating disorder field (which has also included co-occurring disorders like substance abuse as well) many of the challenges go far beyond the food. The food is just a byproduct of other issues such as control, anxiety or fear, rigid thinking, or body image, amongst many others. Other challenges people may have can be with having access to healthy nutrition or financial constraints. Organic food is typically more expensive or may require traveling to find it; this can create barriers for some people as well. People who struggle with some of these mental health challenges may also struggle with keeping a consistent schedule which can lead to issues with jobs which in turn can lead to barriers with access to consistent adequate nutrition. Another issue that may occur is that when symptoms of one challenge are treated, sometimes new challenges with something else can pop up. This can happen due to increased stress or anxiety to treat one coping mechanism. If the skills aren't present to ride through the wave of urges while treating one problem, people may reach for another maladaptive strategy to cope.

Q Are there specific nutrients or types of foods that can be helpful for supporting mental health and reducing cravings during recovery?

People will sometimes utilize supplementation during major transition times, such as the recovery process. Each part of nutrition can help during the recovery process in different ways. Protein is useful for craving management and emotion regulation improvement. Some items also work to reduce inflammation, such as omega-3 fatty acids, which can help to improve moods. B vitamins are also useful as they can assist in improving mood, attention, and reduce fatigue throughout the process of working towards long term recovery with mental health challenges. We also know that excessive amounts of sugar and caffeine are not beneficial for overall health. Whole food nutrition also carries benefits as it is not processed with additional chemicals and additives.

Q For someone who feels overwhelmed by nutrition advice, what are one or two small, realistic changes they could start with that would make a meaningful difference?

A consistently colorful plate at regular intervals throughout the day is the best way to support healthy nutrition habits over the lifespan. Having a plate full of a variety of whole food groups/choices, with a variety of colors, is a great way to work towards a healthy lifestyle with food.

Q How can family members, sponsors, or recovery communities support healthier eating habits without adding pressure or shame?

Support people can have such a strong and beneficial impact on loved ones around nutrition; this can be as simple as sharing a check-in over a snack together, offering to cook or prepare a meal to enjoy quality time together, support with groceries, or a hot, balanced meal! We live in a culture that focuses so heavily on talking about and scrutinizing food. Sometimes, the most helpful thing can be finding something else to talk about together and just share a meal. It is advised that support people refrain from sharing judgments or opinions around food by encouraging or offering variety instead.

Q What are some additional resources that our readers can access for more information?

There are so many resources available through social media exposure. Nutrition Matters, NAMI, The Glucose Revolution, Health at Every Size, Food Psych and The Addicted Minds Podcasts, Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Intuitive Eating, and Ellyn Satter Institute just to name a few.

Q If there's one key message you hope readers in recovery take away about nutrition and mental health, what would it be?

The best sustainable place to focus on nutrition and mental health is consistent, balanced whole nutrition. Also, aim to do this "most of the time." As humans, our relationships with food and nutrition can't be perfect all of the time; we have to be realistic. To quote Ellyn Satter's work regarding Normal Eating: "...Normal eating is trusting your body to make up for some of your mistakes in eating. It is giving food and eating some of your time and attention, but keeps its place as only one important area of your life ...In short, normal eating is flexible. It varies in response to your hunger, schedule, proximity to food and your feelings."

If you have a question for the experts, or you are an expert interested in being featured, please email phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com. Experts have not been compensated for their advice nor have they paid for placement.

I don't trust a man who doesn't walk with a limp.

LARRY CRABB

SUPPORT GROUPS

MONDAYS

1900 Mens Al-anon, 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.

CHOW – Culinary Hospitality Outreach and Wellness: Monday (also Tuesday & Wednesdays) at 7pm CST. CHOW is an organization led by culinary and hospitality peers. We believe in a future where our community never loses another person to addiction, burnout, or mental health concerns. We create safe and supportive opportunities for the industry to connect and discuss problems they're facing with others who "get it." Working in the hospitality industry is tough. Let's talk about it. Meetings are currently in virtual format via Zoom. Please visit our website or Facebook page for codes to join in or contact: outreach@chowco.org.

Chronic Pain Anonymous: The welcome and orientation is held on the 4th Monday of the month at 3:00 PM CT. More info at https://chronicpainanonymous.org/meetings/find-a-meeting/

Online Gamers Anonymous and Olganon: Mondays at 6:30 at the Cavalier Club, 7179 Washington Ave. South, Edina. Cavalier Club is located on the corner of Valley View and HWY 169.. Plenty of free parking! If video games or other excessive tech use is making your life unmanageable or if someone you care about is gaming excessively, we'd love to meet you. More info on this emerging 12 Step Movement at www.olganon.org

Understanding Eating Disorders, Treatment, and Recovery: Second Monday of each month, 6-8:30 p.m. 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 ffosmn@yahoo.com or call Tracy at 651-587-8006.

Debtors Anonymous: Offers hope for people whose use of unsecured debt causes problems and suffering. See debtorsanonymous.org or www.danorthernplains.org to find a meeting online, in person or hybrid (both online and in person).

Anonymous: Alanon 12-Step Group. We meet Mondays at 1:30pm in person at Minneapolis United Methodist Church at 3701 E. 50th Street, Minneapolis, MN 55417. Open to men and women. We are a kind, compassionate group and welcome all.

TUESDAYS

Recovering Couples Anonymous: 7pm. We are a 12 step group for couples wanting to find new ways to communicate. The only requirement for membership is a desire to maintain a committed relationship and develop new intimacy. We provide strong couple support and model healthy couple-ships. Currently meeting via zoom only. Contact Allan at 651-295-9268 or Diane at 651-295-8179 for details

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.

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: No Tuesday or Saturday in-person meetings yet. More details: www.nicotine-anonymous.org.

Overeaters Anonymous Roseville: Meetings are held from 10–11am (and Saturday's from 8-9) 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.

Adult Survivors of Child Abuse -Anonymous Peer Support Group Online: Meets 1st and 3rd Tuesday of every month at 7PM CST. Speaker topic and time for discussion. All may listen and/or share. Email knestingen@earthlink.net for the meeting link if you are a survivor.

Minnesota Recovery Connection Virtual Family Recovery Support Group: 2nd and 4th Tuesday of every month from 7:00 to 8:30 pm. Family group provides support for concerned others of people with substance use disorders. The group uses principles from CRAFT (Community Reinforcement and Family Training), developed by Robert Meyers, Ph.D. from the University of New Mexico. For more information and to be added to an email reminder list, contact: Gloria Englund at gloria@recoveringu.com or call 612-749-4006

WEDNESDAYS

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

CHOW – Culinary Hospitality Outreach and Wellness: Wednesdays (also Monday & Tuesdays for Spanish speakers) at 8pm CST. CHOW is an organization led by culinary and hospitality peers. We believe in a future where our community never loses another person to addiction, burnout, or mental health concerns. We create safe and supportive opportunities for the industry to connect and discuss problems they're facing with others who "get it." Working in the hospitality industry is tough. Let's talk about it. Meetings are currently in virtual format via Zoom. Please visit our website or Facebook page for codes to join in or contact: outreach@chowco.org.

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 -8:30pm. 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 or Tom 651-894-3523.

Transitions: 7:30 to 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.org

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

Co-dependents Anonymous (CoDA): Wednesdays 9:15am and 6:30pm, Macalester Plymouth United 1658 Lincoln Ave, St Paul 55105. These meetings are open to men and women. For more info contact Joe S (6:30pm group) 612-978-4698; www.MinnCoDA.org

Marijuana Anonymous, Bloomington, 6-7pm, 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

THURSDAYS

Co-dependents Anonymous (CoDA): Thursdays pm, Crown of Glory Church 1141 Cardinal St. Chaska 55318. Open to men and women. For more info contact Rita 952-334-9206; www.MinnCoDA.org

Co-dependents Anonymous (CoDA): Thursdays 7pm, Immanuel Lutheran Church 16515 Luther Way, Eden Prairie 55346. Open to men and women. For more info www.MinnCoDA.org.

Co-dependents Anonymous (CoDA): Thursdays 7pm, NE Recovery Room at 520 NE Lowry Ave., Mpls 55418. Open to men and women. For more info contact Deirdre 612-619-7595; www.MinnCoDA.org

Workaholics Anonymous: 12 step group for finding balance between work, activity and fun. Meets every Thur. 6-7:15 pm. We are currently meeting by Zoom. Contact us for link at 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.

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 La'Tosia 651-319-2554.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Emotions Anonymous is a twelve-step program for emotional wellness and learning to live with unsolved problems. The meeting is at Twin Cities Friends Meetinghouse, 1725 Grand Ave. St. Paul at 7:00pm on Friday (or by phone at 240-591-0215#, then 722360#.). Members attend for various reasons, among them depression, anxiety, relationship problems and other emotional difficulties. Like AA, Emotions Anonymous is led by volunteers, and founded on the principle of anonymity. For information, contact Paul at 651-402-6774. Additional information, including other Twin Cities meetings, can be found at www.emotionsanonymous.org.

SATURDAYS

Overeaters Anonymous Meeting: Saturday morning at 9:00 AM at Macallister-Plymouth Church. For those still suffering from compulsive overeating, bulimia and anorexia.

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: Meeting via Zoom only. 10:30 to 11:30 am. Contact Ralph W. at rwwink@aol.com or 612-382-0674.

CoDA Group: Saturdays 12pm-1:30pm, Suburban North Alano at 15486 Territorial Rd. Maple Grove 55369. Open to men and women. For more info contact Janine 763-458-0812; http://www.MinnCoDA.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: Offers hope for people whose use of unsecured debt causes problems and suffering. See www.debtorsanonymous.org or www.danorthernplains.org to find a meeting online, in person or hybrid (both online and in person).

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 at Faith Mennonite Church, 2720 E. 22nd St, Minneapolis. Website: tinyurl.com/tcocdsg. Call before coming for direction. Burt at 612-547-6388.

Adult Children of Alcoholics & Dysfunctional Families: Saturday at 10 a.m., St. Philip's Lutheran Church, 6180 Highway 65 NE, Fridley MN 55432-5106 (Enter at Door 3 or Door 11 to Meeting in Room 1). Contact Karri at pogissa@yahoo.com or 651-238-7463.

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.

Southside Men's Group: Saturdays, 8:30 to 10am Support for men working toward positive personal change. Saints Luke & James Episcopal Church, 4557 Colfax Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55419 (2nd floor). Visit www.southsidemensgroup.org.

SUNDAYS

Co-dependents Anonymous (CoDA): Sundays 6pm-7:30pm. Located at Unity Hospital 550 Osborne Rd. Fridley 55432. Held in the Boardroom on the lower level. Enter through main doors and take the West elevator down one floor. Open to men and women. For more info contact Aaron 763-670-4894; www.MinnCoDA.org.

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 pkng lot, turn left down the hall. LeeAnn J at 763-234-1054 or Margaret K at 612-823-8279.

Adult Children of Alcoholic/ Dysfunctional Families (ACA)- Big Red Book:. 11:15am-12:45pm at the Cavalier Club. 7179 Washington Ave S., Edina, MN 55439, voicemail: 507- 312-9423, aca1115sunday@gmail.com.

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. Call Jim B. at 651-779-6828.

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.

Debtors Anonymous: a group of men and women who use the 12-Step program to solve problems of debt and other money issues: www.danorthernplains.org, 952-953-8438, 5:30 – 6:30 pm, Oak Knoll Lutheran Church, 600 County Rd 73, Minnetonka, MN, (Hopkins Crossroads, just north of 394, enter in rear of building, the Plymouth 2 Alanon).

Opiates Anonymous: Sunday Evenings at 7 pm at Unity of the Valley Spiritual Center, 4011 West Hwy 13, Savage, MN. OA is the first 12-step-based group in the state of Minnesota offering help and support for anyone with a desire to stop using opiates and all other mind altering substances. If you think that you may have a problem with opiates or other mind altering substances, attending one of our meetings may help you decide if you are an addict. If you want to tap into help and support from people and a program with proven success, this is the place for you. No sign up or registration is needed. Just show up at 7 pm on Sunday evenings. If questions contact Ron at 952-657-9119

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@thephoenixspirit.com. In-kind donations are appreciated to keep these listings published and updated at www.thephoenixspirit.com/support.

Driggs from page 1

good-looking guy. Give her a chance." So Joleen and I had a whirlwind romance and hardly ever left the bedroom. We developed a good relationship and were the talk of the town. Everybody loved Joleen. She even got hired in the mayor's office as a Public Relations Director. Finally after a year, she said it's time for us to get married. She offered to be my wife if I agreed to never see my family again. That troubled me at first. But heh, I never saw them much anyway and who was I to pass up such an amazing woman as Joleen. So we got hitched and were very happy together for six months. Everything changed after her job promotion. Joleen didn't like me touching her and asked if I could sleep in the den. She said she was tense over work and didn't feel sexy like she used to. So I relented. But I cried myself to sleep a lot of the time. I wondered how I had gone from being a stud to a dud in the bedroom. Finally I found out. A friend of Joleen's told me the bad news. She said that Joleen was having an affair with the mayor. I just couldn't believe what I was told. I rushed up to Joleen and confronted her. She only got furious with me, saying how I was threatening her and ruining her name. A week later I got served with divorce papers and a restraining order, accusing me of domestic battery. I was shocked! I didn't know what I was up against. Heartbroken and scared, I scurried back to Georgia. Later I realized that Joleen had just used me and was on to bigger and better things. I had been her fool for love out of my need to be with a classy woman. What the heck was I thinking?

LET ME COUNT THE WAYS WE FOOL OURSELVES

Some of us are completely unable to see ourselves as we really are. We're so easily crushed by any form of criticism that we live in our own private world of make-believe. We are so afraid of feedback from others that we never let others see us as we really are. We also fool ourselves. Who we think we are is vastly discrepant with how others see us. We may live our lives as if we're the next *American Idol* when in reality we cannot even sing. Some of us are so self deluded that we cannot even see that we are. Our lives may totally revolve around maintaining a false self so that others do not see our own vulnerabilities and emptiness. We may even have many saving graces in what we offer others but personal integrity is not one of them. People who are incapable of compassion fall into this category. Con artists, drama queens, princes, paranoids and bean counters are among such people

Other people *do* see who they really are but would rather not. Often they feel there is more value in hiding from themselves than in being who they really are. Addicts who struggle with sobriety often know there is a part of them that doesn't work but they would rather maintain denial in order to continue using. When your primary relationship is with a substance, you certainly don't want caring people to get in the way of your using. Indeed, if you let people actually care about you, you may have to feel the incredible shame over how out of control your life really is. At least some part of an addict has the ability to feel and be vulnerable, but they live in the land of denial. Drug users, alcoholics, anorexics, shopaholics and compulsive gamblers are among such people.

All of us have some form of self-deception. We may overrate our job performance or think we can cook better than we can. We all need some make-believe to get by. Otherwise we would be overwhelmed by life. Problems with self-deception arise when our fantasy lives are more extreme, interfere with our real lives and are totally unknown to ourselves. As Sheldon Kopp, a famous psychotherapist, once said, "It's not the pretending, but the pretending that we're not pretending that hurts us."

RECOGNIZING SELF-DISHONESTY

If you really want to know if you're being honest with yourself here are some telltale signs that you aren't:

- You continually go out of your way to hide certain aspects of yourself to others
- You explain away some unwelcome parts of yourself through convoluted logic
- You are constantly checking that others don't know the real you
- Your secret life is only known to you and you like it that way
- You are so adept at pretending that others would never guess your secrets
- You are shocked by feedback from others and often reject it, saying "It just isn't me"
- You sometimes behave in ways that are totally unlike how you normally act
- You feel more relaxed being around sleazy people and deadbeats
- You don't recognize your face in the mirror or see your image as real

COSTS AND BENEFITS OF DECEIVING OURSELVES

All of us lie to ourselves. We do it regularly, sometimes for very good reasons. None of us deserves condemnation or judgment for hiding from ourselves. It's best to evaluate our decisions regarding self-honesty, both pro and con, to make wiser choices. Say for example we are in a loveless marriage with three young children to care for. After many failed efforts to resolve our difficulties, we may decide to stay with our spouse for the sake of our children and make the best of a bad situation. If we're not being abused and the children appear happier living in an intact family we may benefit from looking on the brighter side of things. We may need to pretend that things are OK until our children are older and we have the support to make changes. Our looking on the bright side may even lessen the doldrums we feel from our marriage and possibly improve it. Actually faking it until you make it is a strategy shared by many people. Some of us may have demons from our pasts that we're not ready to face. So for now, it's often better to pretend and know we're doing it.

On the other hand, when we're oblivious to ourselves or when our self-deceit is hurting ourselves or others, then the costs of pretending may be too great to bear. Our avoidance may contribute to a diminished view of ourselves, cause us to have ongoing unexplained battles with loved ones and result in depression. You may question, "How can I even face what is invisible to myself?" First realize that you're probably not totally oblivious to yourself. You may even be using your oblivion as an excuse. Secondly, recognize that if enough trustworthy people are telling you have a problem, you probably do. Why would a number of people who love you lie to you? To be happy all of us must at times surrender ourselves to those who love us. Finally, if you have to face some painful fact in yourself, don't freak out. You don't have to do it alone and what you face is probably not as big as you're making it. Besides there's no hiding from essential truths in ourselves. As Kopp also once said, "We can run but we can't hide."

FACING THE MUSIC

The most important rule in facing painful truths in ourselves is not to do it alone. Be in relationship with someone you trust and then bring your truth into the light of day. Confession to a steadfast helper is good for the soul. An honest 12-stepper or competent professional helper may do the trick. For guidance read, Sheldon Kopp's *Mirror, Mask and Shadow.* Take your time to work on the relationship first to see if your mentor is strong enough to hear your truth. You may want to reveal less risky but very personal aspects of yourself and see how your prospective supporter responds. If you feel understood and cared for over safer aspects of your personal life, chance are good that your trusted helper will come through for you in more weighty matters. Realize that what you fear most is yourself and your own self-criticisms. This truth may become painfully evident as you discover that something you've always kept under wraps is in fact no big deal to your respected supporter. Often it's the caring by others, not our big bad secret, that freaks us out.

Most of us shun love; we prefer the familiarity of known misery to the joy of moving on with our lives. Let me reassure you, being happy may separate you from your misery and the problem people from your past but it will also give you a whole new view of yourself with a promising fresh set of real friends. To thine own self be true; let the truth set you free.

***John H. Driggs**, is a retired Licensed Clinical Social Worker, living in St. Paul and co-author of Intimacy Between Men.*

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ESSAY

May I Have a Word With You?

*by **Mary Lou Logsdon***

Photo illustration by iStock / The Phoenix Spirit

"I know nothing in the world that has as much power as a word. Sometimes I write one, and I look at it until it begins to shine."
EMILY DICKINSON

Here we are again, another year. Maybe it's my age, but it does seem that they roll around more quickly than in the past. "Wait!" I shout. *I'm not quite done with this year!* I need to squeeze a little more out of it, to give it time to improve its standing. I know I will surrender to the inevitability of its passing and hope for the best in the year to come.

Like a fine sauce, I would like to reduce the year to its essence, a simple sentence or a single word. Merriam Webster designated their 2025 word of the year as slop, defined as "digital content of low quality that is produced usually in quantity by means of artificial intelligence." It expands the definition of a word that would mystify my farmer grandfather, though the tie to pig sty does seem appropriate for those who feel inundated with what looks like information but often is trite data that obscures more than informs.

Words can be fun. Wordle gives me a new word every day. Crossword puzzles spark my imagination. Scrabble tests my creative arrangement of letters.

Words are wonderful building blocks for forging hopes and dreams. We also know how devastating words can be when someone uses a word to disparage us or someone we love. Like measles, I thought we had eradicated many of those words only to find that they have been laying dormant, ready to reemerge as guardrails are removed.

I love muscular words. They feel like entries to another world. Take the word *quintessential.* Merriam Webster defines it as "perfectly typical or representative of a particular kind of person or thing." Digging into its etymology, using our trusty dictionary, we learn that it evolved from the words *quinta* meaning five and *essentia* meaning element. Scientists and philosophers in ancient times concluded that the earth was made up of four elements: air, water, earth, and fire. Aristotle later added a fifth element that made up the rest of space. Eventually this fifth element *(quinta essentia)* came to mean anything so perfect, it surpassed the elements of earth. Thus, we have our word, *quintessential.* A perfectly good word for defining the true essence, the highest form. The new year is the *quintessential* time to reassess where my life is taking me.

Christine Valters Paintner in her book, *Give Me a Word,* describes how in the first and second centuries AD, people would go to the desert to seek wisdom from women and men who lived as hermits, spending their days in prayer and pondering, not dissimilar to gurus in the Eastern traditions. People would come to ask for a word. What they would get is a single word or a short phrase. They would take that and meditate on it, explore it, live with the invitation to let it lead them.

Paintner encourages us to find a word—for the day or the week or the year. Or, perhaps more accurately, to let a word find us. I can be grabbed by a word, often having to look up its meaning, made easier with our electronic tools rather than having to dig out the dictionary, now relegated to the basement, relic of another era.

Last year the word that found me was *release.* It is a word I returned to throughout the year—*releasing* fears more imagined than real, habits past their expiration date, dreams lost to the realities of age and time. *Release.* Set free. As I turn my attention to what word may be calling me this year, I consider words that have caught my attention of late. Here are some that are considering me:

Zest. In a time of upheaval as we are experiencing, *zest* comes with an energy that won't surrender to despair. It is a word that carries vitality and engagement. Like the lemon zest I add to a salad, it sparkles, enlivens as it engages.

How about *reappraisal*? I recently read about the power of *positive reappraisal.* When I spill coffee grounds on the newly cleaned floor, speak without thought or care, move too fast and break my toe, I can beat myself up or I can choose to *reappraise* the situation from a positive point of view. I am glad that I have a little hand vacuum that makes clean up easy. I have another opportunity to remember how golden silence can be. I see that the universe is reminding me to slow down before I break something more critical than a toe. *Reappraisal* might be useful this year.

Silence. Now there is a practical word. *Silence* the inner chatter. *Silence* my phone when I need a break. *Silence* the 24/7 news. Welcome the *silence* of nature.

Reverence. I could choose to notice the innate value and beauty in my encounters with people, nature, life. *Reverence* implies respect and awe. *Awe* is another full word. What brings me to *awe?* Where do I experience that tingling sense of knowing that I am with something greater than the ordinary? The times that I tear up with stories of heroic acts, the sacrifices people make for others, the full moon brightening a winter landscape while creating shadows in the night. If the word *reverence* chooses me, I might note when it shows up and I keep a *reverence* journal to review when I am feeling lost.

Let the magic of words enrich your year ahead.

Let them be filled with honesty, kindness, and care.

Hope. Theologian Walter Brueggemann says, "Hope is a human act of commitment to and investment in the future. Hope is an act of human courage that refuses to cherish the present too much or be reduced to despair by present circumstance." *Hope* could be a good transition word into the new year, especially when tempted by resignation or fear.

Freedom. Change. Sobriety. Powerless. Powerful words, packed with possibility.

Play. Now that could be a helpful word in the year ahead. Or *Create* or *Joy* or *Passion.* Where might those words lead me? Will this year's word lead me to expand my life or contract it? Will it call me to more or to less? Will it open me to new vistas or pull me into more frequent pauses?

What word is calling you? What word or phrase sums up the year just ended? J.K. Rowling says, "Words are, in my not-so-humble opinion, our most inexhaustible source of magic. Capable of both inflicting injury, and remedying it." I think she is right. Let the magic of words enrich your year ahead. Let them be filled with honesty, kindness, and care. Happy New Year!

***Mary Lou Logsdon** is a spiritual director in the Twin Cities. She can be reached at logsdon.marylou@gmail.com.*