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WHY WE LIE AND HOW TO STOP Where the Truth Lies



by Pat Samples

We all lie more than we'd like to think we do – to look good, to avoid trouble, to keep safe. But addicts lie as if their life depends on it. They say and do whatever is necessary to hide their addiction from others and themselves. Their slide into self-deception escalates as their disease worsens. They convince themselves: *I can handle it. Next time it won't be so bad. I'm not hurting anyone.*

The cost for lying is high for addicts. Yet they often become beacons for honesty once they are in recovery. Maybe what addicts learn in recovery has something to teach all of us about how to be more truthful.

LYING AS SELF-PROTECTION

Compulsive gambler Terra Carbert says her lying was a “form of self-protection, a way to manage how other people perceived me.” Until the casinos became her go-to place, Carbert considered herself an honest person, even being “very intentional about telling the truth.” But as her casino trips and her losses multiplied, she lied. “I was lying about where I was, who I was with, why I needed to borrow money.”

She lied so she could keep chasing after her drug of choice — money. Driven to snatch the big win, she would place yet another bet, never doubting she could stop doing so anytime. She was sure she could beat the odds.

The lies went beyond hiding her addiction, Carbert says now, three years into recovery. “I pretended my life was

WHERE THE TRUTH LIES to pg 5

FROM NORTHSTAR PROBLEM GAMBLING ALLIANCE

Coping With Another Person's Gambling Problem

by Bill Stein

Maria suspected that something was going on with her husband but didn't know what. He was taking a lot of phone calls behind closed doors. He often seemed frantic to intercept the mailman before the mail was delivered to their house. And his interest in the outcome of various sporting events seemed to intensify in the last few months. What could be going on?

It was only after the bank threatened to foreclose on their house that Maria learned that her husband had a sports gambling addiction that had drained their finances. Until

then, she didn't know that such a condition existed and assumed people just gambled with money that they could afford.

Unfortunately, Maria's predicament is not uncommon. Indeed, the plight of the concerned others of a problem gambler — which could be friends, coworkers or various family members — can be very challenging. The more they can learn about this poorly understood addiction, the better they can cope for themselves.

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Learning How and When to Trust Others

*Hold fast to dreams,
For if dreams die,
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.*

— LANGSTON HUGHES, 1902-1967, poet

Let's talk about trusting others. We live in an age of massive distrust. Political leaders are frequently seen today as self-serving and lacking integrity even when many are honorable. Yet the betrayals of public trust and insensitivity towards the people they serve really do happen and are so commonplace that many of us become numb to the abuses of power in our political leaders. Indeed, many of them do lie to us regularly. Clearly many of our leaders are more interested in getting re-elected than doing the “right thing” when it comes to ethics and public service. Saving face is more important than personal responsibility. Even when many of our political leaders are acting with integrity it can be hard for our jaded citizens to trust them.

Such abuses of power are traumatic for many of us. We live each day with heightened anxiety, often glued to our TVs, awaiting the next episode of having the rug pulled out from under us. The worst realization in all this is the fact that it is we ourselves who have elected such representatives. We all have a major part in our own undoing. We may unwisely decide that if people in power are unethical then we can turn a blind eye to our own behaviors and decide it is OK to lie and cheat to get ahead. Or we may take the moral high ground and wonder who among us is putting such representatives in leadership roles. This shift of looking away from ourselves and blaming others causes many of us to distrust each other and make enemies of people we disagree with. On top of this we have political leaders telling us what we see and hear isn't really happening. This type of behavior, commonly known as gas lighting, interferes with our confidence in knowing what to trust. Overall, we lose the ability to know how to trust, we lose faith in our ability to make judgments and we let life just happen to us.

In this traumatic state we make two mistakes in deciding who to trust: We either take the extreme position that we can't rely on anybody or we live in a world of naiveté, unrealistically seeing no danger when there is real danger. We either don't trust enough or we trust too much.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

A Fantastical Wonderland of Virtual Realities

by Louise Elowen



"It was all very well to say, 'Drink me,' but the wise little Alice was not going to do that in a hurry. 'No, I'll look first,' she said, 'and see whether it's marked 'poison' or not.'"
CHAPTER I, DOWN THE RABBIT-HOLE, ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND, LEWIS CARROLL

Most of us are familiar with the novel, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, by the 19th century English author, Lewis Carroll. I mention it here, as I think that it is a good analogy for today's virtual reality world. The world that many of us have lived in more and more, at least for the past 12 months of our lives. For sure there are many good things about the virtual world. I rely 100% on it for my income these days through my online business. And "meeting up" with friends and families far and wide through *Zoom* and *Skype* video apps has never been easier. Best of all, we don't even have to leave our homes to enjoy these conveniences.

This virtual world that I talk about is in our homes 24/7. We allow it to be there. *Want a pizza?* Order it up online and have it delivered to your door without speaking two words to anyone. We spend hours on the internet looking for deals on items we don't really need, networking on social media to keep up with the latest "trends" of our friends and peers, and, quite honestly, we leave ourselves exhausted. The world has no boundaries anymore. We don't leave it at our front door. It's there. In our homes. Just ask *Al-Exa* if you don't believe me.

And with it comes all sorts of addictive behaviors. So how do we avoid falling into an *Alice-in-Wonderland* rabbit hole of addictions and addictive behavior, in this world that we call "the internet?" We actually need to learn to set or reinforce *boundaries*. A line that we don't cross, and we don't allow others to cross without our permission.

Here's a few tips if you are looking to set boundaries: Don't believe everything you read or see. Don't buy or subscribe to everything you "must have." And, most importantly, spend some time in the real world. Establish a boundary between yourself and this virtual reality world we live in. Set time limits on how long you spend on a social media site. Know specifically what you are going online for *before* doing it. And make sure that you don't get dragged down the rabbit hole. You really don't need every shiny, new thing that crosses your path. *You* have the power to control. I will leave you with that thought, in the words of one of my all-time favorite movies:

"You've always had the power [my dear], you just had to learn it for yourself." GLINDA THE GOOD WITCH, THE WIZARD OF OZ.

Louise



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The Hidden World of Video Gaming Addiction

by **Emily Brunner**

In 2020, as in-person activities were shuttered for months, our online lives took on much more significance and that included increased exposure to video games. Although there has been much handwringing about screen time and the addictive dangers of video games, hard facts have been difficult for both parents and clinicians to come by.

I primarily treat opioid use disorder, most often people with a history of heroin use, so compared to the dangers of a fatal overdose on fentanyl, the risks of being exposed to *Animal Crossing* can seem almost laughable at times. But just because the dangers are more subtle, does not mean they are not present. For one thing, for each hour per day of video games played, there is a 2-fold increase in the risk of obesity (Lu 2013). It's not even just gaming that takes up long hours, there is also now the phenomenon of video game streaming (i.e., watching other people play the games) on platforms like Discord and Twitch. This is not a small trend either, as Twitch was acquired by Amazon for over 900 million dollars in 2014.

I personally have 3 children, and our family rules around screen time and free-to-play games on the iPad were dramatically relaxed over the last year. It is understandable to me why video games are an enjoyable way to spend time. Video games offer concrete goals in a modern world, in which many of our school and workdays have been reduced to screen-time without any fun side quests or augmented graphics. Who doesn't want to tune out and save the world? Especially when the alternative is attending yet another day of back-to-back Zoom work meetings or a day of "Google class."

While there is a myriad of games currently available, it is primarily the massive multiplayer role-playing games (such as *World of Warcraft*) and the free-to-play games (such as *Fortnite*) that are most reinforcing for people. There are a variety of cognitive strategies that act to make gameplay more addictive, but one particularly pernicious example has been the lure of buying blind loot boxes. In the case of *Fortnite*, Epic games ended this blind "loot box" structure of purchasing in 2019 and a settlement was offered after it was acknowledged that this was a harmful paradigm (www.epiclootboxsettlement.com). For the *World of Warcraft*, it is common for players to form guilds, requiring large blocks of time to commit to being present with others counting on you. In the case of the free-to-play games, they are easy to download and start on the ubiquitous smart phones and



Brunner

tablets that surround us, and often suggested by online ads and algorithms. But they are much easier to start than stop and as the saying goes, "free to play, pay to win."

In May 2019, the World Health Organization formally recognized Internet Gaming Disorder as a diagnosis to be included in the ICD-11 (International Classification of Diseases). The diagnosis hinges on whether game playing is impairing everyday life activities and relationships and not a specific number of hours of being played. This is akin to diagnosis of substance use disorders, which is not made via urine test or a specific pattern of use, but by documenting that use of the substance is impairing one's health and ability to function. From available evidence, addiction to video games remains very much the exception rather than the rule. In 2017 an article per the American Journal of Psychiatry estimated that 0.3% to 1% of the population may qualify for a diagnosis of internet gaming disorder (Przybylski, AK).

Video gaming, while often portrayed in television shows and movies as the province of young loners, is actually something that 50% of adults in the US enjoy (Pew 2015). Video gaming and screen use is also something that parents worry about intensely. In a recent Pew research study, 66% percent of parents said that parenting now is harder than it was 20 years ago and many of the reasons cited relate to recent changes in technology (26%), social media (21%), and device distractions (6%). In my experience, nothing gets a discussion hopping with other parents like talking about the "right" parameters to guide technology use, such as when it is best to buy a phone, which video games to allow and for how long.

Video games are also played by both men and women in close to equal numbers. Despite this, the gender represen-

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tations portrayed on the cover of these games seem to beam in from decades past, with bosoms heaving and muscles bulging on idealized body types. Even the culture of many video games has become somewhat entwined with a certain brand of toxic masculinity. Consider #GamerGate, a controversy from 2014 when Zoe Quinn was accused of trading intimacy for a positive review of her game by her ex-boyfriend and subsequently harassed to the point of having to move. Because of this focus, the diagnosis can be overlooked in girls, who may be assumed of not playing because of gender.

For many enthusiastic gamers without a formal problem, once they decide to stop it can be as easy as doing so. And again, to be clear, most of those who play video games, do not have a clinical issue. But for those with an internet gaming disorder, stopping is difficult even as friendships fray and bank accounts whither. Per a recent review by Dr. Ziaj in 2020, some forms of therapy and the medication bupropion showed preliminary evidence of being effective for treatment. However, more research is needed to clarify best practices. Certainly, this is an easier problem to address in middle school and high school, when parents have more control over a child's finances and boundaries. One of the most important interventions to do at home is to work on setting clear limits with gaming, and to work with your child on finding replacement activities for the games that help fulfill the need being met. For example sudoku puzzles, if the goal is cognitive challenge, or a sports team, if the goal is building a friendship group.

A good guideline for parents is to limit gaming to 1 hour on weekdays and 2 hours on weekends. It is also important to come up with a strategy for holidays and days off school ahead of time, so that fights don't begin over it.

In Minnesota, we now offer treatment at Sage Prairie Clinic, where the goal is to first perform a thorough evaluation to rule out other underlying issues, such as ADHD or major depressive disorder which might be leading to the behavior. We are also starting a group for parents, to support each other in setting and maintaining boundaries.

Dr. Emily Brunner is a Distinguished Fellow of the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) and immediate past president of the ASAM Minnesota chapter. She is board-certified in both family medicine and addiction medicine. She has an interest in internet gaming disorder and is working to establish the first medical treatment program for internet gaming disorder in Minnesota.

In May 2019, the World Health Organization formally recognized Internet Gaming Disorder as a diagnosis to be included in the ICD-11 (International Classification of Diseases)

from page 1

great,” she says, an easy enough claim with her career successes and high earnings. But her happy public face covered up feelings of grief over the death of family members. With little understanding of how to manage her emotional life, she went to the casino to escape, to have fun.

Then it became the place to go to escape boredom, to celebrate, to deal with a bad day. It became, Terra says, “like a trusted companion, no matter what mood I was in.” She would even head for the slot machine that her deceased grandmother used to enjoy, to feel a kind of communion with her.

HIDING FROM HIS MOTHER

Like Carbert, Harry Cunnane had always thought of himself as an honest person, until drugs came to dominate his life. In a new book he co-authored with his mother, U.S. House of Representatives member Madeleine Dean, the authors write about how deception nearly destroyed him.

Nothing in his upbringing would have predicted this descent into deceit. “I had anything and everything I could have hoped for – love and support all around me,” Cunnane says in an interview for this article. “I had a strong moral sense of what was right and wrong.” But once drugs became his master, he had to lie to keep from being found out.

When he dropped out of college to work low-wage warehouse jobs, routinely showing up late for work, and he couldn’t manage his money, his mother questioned him. “Is it drugs?” He lied. She cried. He cried. The deception went on.

When Cunnane learned he would become a father, he resolved to change so he could be the kind of dad he wanted to be. Yet, “the night my daughter was born, I continued to get high,” he says. “My word didn’t carry any weight.”

LIES MULTIPLY

For addicts like Carbert and Cunnane, the lies keep compounding, says Susan Campion, a counselor in the outpatient gambling treatment program at Fairview Health Services in Minneapolis. “They get excited because they’re getting away with something. They don’t think the rules apply to them. They lie so much they eventually convince themselves.”

As Shawntrell Moore, a Chicago-based addiction counselor for Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, points out, the addict “loses control of their ability to make healthy, conscious decisions.” When the person agrees to go into treatment, recovery can be a slow climb to honesty. They aren’t able to see the full scope of their problem. Says Moore, “They think, ‘It’s OK for me to have one drink’ or ‘This isn’t affecting anyone else, just me.’”

ADMITTING OUR DECEIT IS HARD

The tendency to get caught up in our own self-deceptions is not limited to addicts, however. Nor is our reluctance to admit we’re lying. In her book, *Lies We Tell Ourselves: The Psychology of Self-Deception*, clinical psychologist Cortney Warren, PhD, says, “When we acknowledge our lies, it forces us to face the parts of ourselves that we don’t want to admit.” Yet, she says, “Our tendency to deceive ourselves is part of human nature.” A kind of survival strategy. We “reorganize the truth in a way that is more consistent with what we can psychologically tolerate.”

When lying has serious enough consequences, we are sometimes forced to face it head-on. But even then, the truth about our lying may be too hard to swallow in one chunk.

WAVERING BETWEEN TRUTH AND LIE

Addicts experience a lot of *ambivalence*, says Moore, a term he prefers over denial. “If you call it denial, they get defensive,” he says. They start justifying what they are doing. “Instead, I help them understand that ambivalence is part of the process of recovery.”

Moore says he asks questions that bring out how their substance abuse matches up – or doesn’t -- with their personal values or goals. Questions like, “How does substance abuse benefit you?” He might then validate that their choice matches their goal of, say, alleviating stress at work.

That validation often surprises them, says Moore, and reduces their defensiveness. It may be the first time they feel that someone understands their motivations. From there it is easier to get clients to examine the negative effects of their using – noticing the barriers it creates to achieving important goals they have. They then may shift from lying about their using to agreeing that it is a problem. A short time later though, the lying may resume.

This ambivalence is normal, and Moore says he helps his clients become aware of it and manage it in ways that are realistic and meaningful for them personally. That might include anything from meditation to exercise to confiding in others who understand.

DRAW ON FOUR HONESTY ACTIVATORS

Recognizing ambivalence is one of four honesty activators we can all draw on, as we pursue more honest living, whether we’re in recovery or not. Since lying is a form of self-protection, we can recognize that we lie to feel safe – not a bad motive in itself, since protecting ourselves is a natural instinct. Before we’re ready to acknowledge our lying though, we may need to find safety in some other form. That may not happen overnight.

We may first need to find an understanding counselor, friend, or recovering addict who shows us understanding and acceptance when we tell them about our ambivalence. That acceptance can help reduce our shame and our hesitancy to tell the truth.

IDENTIFY VALUES THAT MATTER TO US

The second honesty activator is asking ourselves what we value enough that we’re willing to tell the truth to get it. Our children? Our health? Our sense of integrity? When Cunnane saw his parents’ bank statements spread across the dining room table with highlighted items showing where he had used their ATM card, he was forced to choose between values. This time, when his mother asked, “Is it drugs?” he said, “Yes.”

Says Cunnane, “I was so beaten down and exhausted from trying to keep track of all the lies, I didn’t have the energy to tell one more.” In that moment, Cunnane gave in to his values of ease and peace of mind, as well as a desire to regain the re-

*No good thing comes from lying.
There may be a short-term gain, but
it’s not good for the psyche. You’re
never going to reach your full human
potential by hiding part of yourself.*

spect of his parents. “I was shocked that I said yes because I had always lied.”

AVOID TEMPTATION

For Carbert, her moment of truth was running out of any further money sources, after draining her life savings and maxing out her borrowing. She spent her full paycheck on her last casino trip and had nowhere else to turn. Gamblers Anonymous led her to the third honesty activator, avoiding temptation.

To keep from lying again, we need to avoid circumstances where we are likely to deceive ourselves. For Carbert, that meant no more casino trips. No bingo either, or silent auctions. “They felt like ‘action’ to me,” she says. She told her friends not to loan her money.

For Cunnane, it means avoiding any actions that might cause him to lie. “If I say I’m going to do things, I do them. I tell my family where I’m going, and I go there. I get there on time and get back on time. It’s doing the right things consistently.” He adds, “Before others can trust me, I have to begin rebuilding trust with myself.”

PUT PROTECTORS IN PLACE

Rigorous honesty with yourself is essential for recovery, says Craig Johnson, addiction counselor for Club Recovery in Edina. That means, “Not lying about anything,” he says. For compulsive gamblers, that may mean not going into the gas station to pay for gas, if pull-tabs have been the usual form of gambling. It may even mean avoiding all gambling venues.

Otherwise, says Johnson, “The lie becomes, ‘The problem isn’t slot machines, it’s just lottery tickets,’ so then they start playing the slots.” Even having cash in their pocket is dangerous, says Johnson. “It’s like an alcoholic having a liter in the back of the car. Eventually they’ll drink it.”

“You have to put protectors in place,” says Campion. That may mean putting your money in a trust fund or getting a special credit card that won’t allow spending at casinos or online. It may mean locking your credit card so you can’t get credit on a whim.

A big trip-up for compulsive gamblers is the certainty in their mind that they’re “due,” says Johnson. They think they can control random events. Any exposure to the opportunity to beat the odds is high-risk for them, and must be avoided, he says. Once they learn to avoid these triggers and stop using, “they don’t need to lie anymore.”

BE ACCOUNTABLE

Critical to avoiding temptation is the fourth honesty activator, accountability. For Carbert, that means her sister became her accountability partner, managing all her financial affairs until she could regain her own integrity with money. It also means attending recovery meetings and telling her friends and family about her addiction as well as her business failures.

She also turned to therapy and life coaching to help her deal with unresolved grief and trauma, so she could get past her longstanding lie of saying, “I’m fine.” She now offers life coaching to other women addicts in recovery, emphasizing the need to be truthful as they aspire for a better life.

“No good thing comes from lying,” says Carbert. “There may be a short-term gain, but it’s not good for the psyche. You’re never going to reach your full human potential by hiding part of yourself.”

Pat Samples is a Twin Cities writer, writing coach, and champion of creative aging. Her website is patsamples.com.

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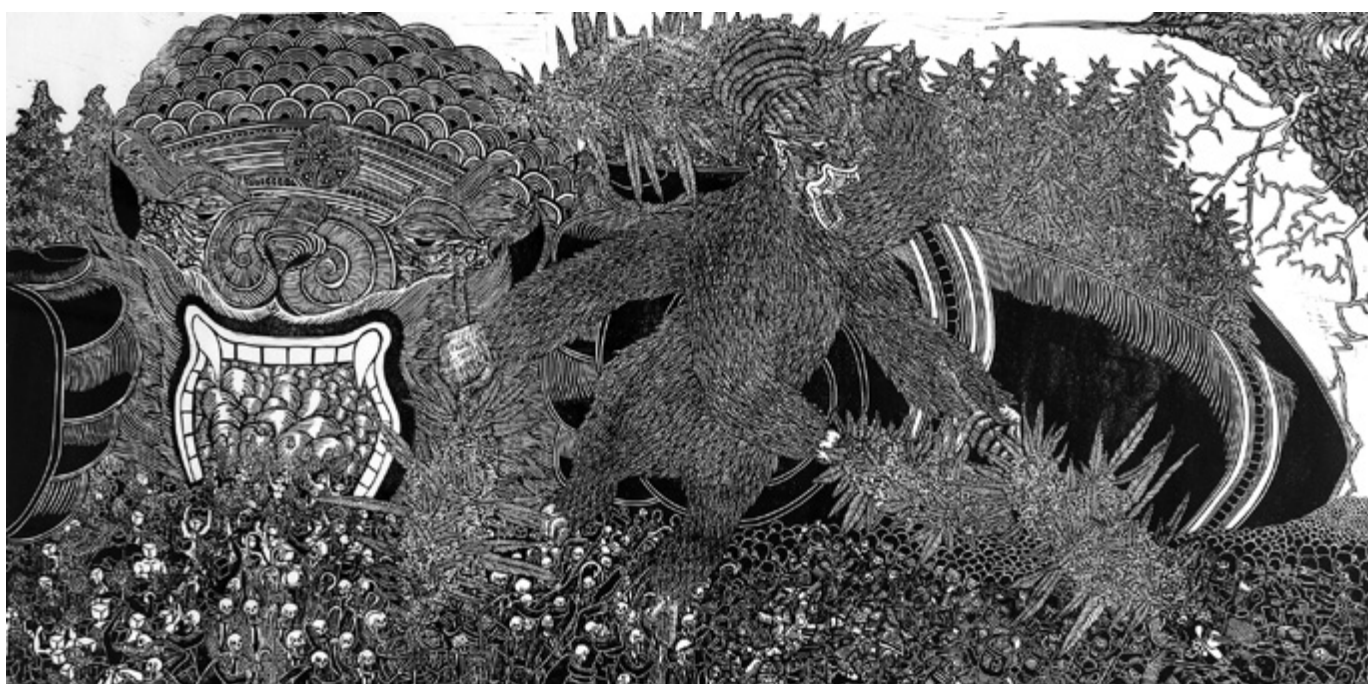
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HISTORY OF DRUGS SERIES

World History of Drugs (Part IV) *by George Lewis*

The following is part four in a series from author, George Lewis. Opinions expressed in this article are not necessarily the views of The Phoenix Spirit.

The year is 1980 and America is in upheaval at every level of society, distrust of government and the power structure is the norm. Jimmy Carter's failed attempt at rescuing the Americans that were taken hostage at the American Embassy in Teheran on April 24th, 1980 was such a failure and embarrassment to the United States that Carter's re-election is all but an assured defeat in the upcoming Presidential elections in November of the same year. He would lose to a B movie Hollywood actor named Ronald Reagan who had been the Governor of California. With the arrival of the 80s and the election of Reagan, drugs, and the Nicaraguan Civil War which will evolve into the Iran-Contra Scandal, America is about to experience how the mix of politics, drugs, drug policy and scandal will betray the American citizen in a way that no other President and his administration has ever done. This betrayal will come close to bringing down the Reagan government, create a drug epidemic and push politicians to put the terminology "The land of the free" in doubt. America will become the country that incarcerates its citizens at a higher rate than any other nation on the planet.

DRUG AND POLITICS IN THE 1980S

No matter the priority that politicians, the media and the public, attach to the ever-growing drug problem at different points in time, drugs were unquestionably a major social problem for the United States in the 1980s. Their significance was compounded by the fact that drug problems do not stand alone.

In the 1960s, a presidential commission stated: "The concern and the distress of the American people over the national problem of drug abuse is expressed every day in newspapers, magazines, scientific journals, public forums and in homes. It is a serious and many-faceted problem." The use of illegal drugs would become a long-standing problem in American society, a problem that would take on a particular urgency over the next 30 years and beyond.

Richard Pryor unwittingly publicized freebasing (the precursor to crack cocaine) when he nearly burned himself to death.

Pryor's famous 'fire incident' occurred on June 9, 1980. Pryor poured rum over himself and proceeded to light himself on fire. According to the Washington Examiner, he was freebasing cocaine. "His daughter said her father was in a drug-induced psychosis and poured rum over his body and set himself on fire." The comedian was given a 1-in-3 chance of living and was lucky to survive. He suffered severe burns that covered more than 50% of his body.²

THE REAGAN FACTOR

The 1980s saw the emergence of cocaine, particularly crack cocaine, as a new focus of concern. Reagan reinforced and expanded much of Nixon's War on Drugs policies. Reagan's wife Nancy launched the "Just Say No" campaign in 1984. Reagan's focus on drugs and the passing of severe penalties for drug-related crimes in Congress and State legislatures led to a huge increase of incarcerations for non-violent drug crimes.

Congress passed the Anti-Drug Abuse Act in 1986. This new law established mandatory minimum prison sentences for certain drug offenses. The law opened the door to many federal and state laws that would be criticized as having racist ramifications because it gave longer prison sentences for offenses involving the same amount of crack cocaine (used more often by black Americans) as powder cocaine (used more often by white Americans). Just 5 grams of crack cocaine triggered an automatic five-year sentence, while it took 500 grams of powder cocaine to merit the same sentence. This law was later called "the 100 to 1" law.

I was both a witness and a victim in the 80s of being arrested on suspicion of drug use at a higher rate than whites. This bias and racist law that began under the Reagan Administration led to a rapid rise in incarcerations for nonviolent drug offenses. In the 1980s there were

50,000 incarcerations for drug offenses, which rose to 400,000 incarcerations by 1997. By 2014, about half of the 186,000 people serving time in federal prisons in the United States were incarcerated on drug-related charges, according to the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

On January 28, 1982, President Reagan created the South Florida Task Force. This task force was created to concentrate and focus on a federal assault on South Americans smuggling cocaine into the country. Reagan put Vice President George H. W. Bush in charge of the effort, which included law enforcement and the use of Naval destroyers and other military assets to stop smugglers. On June 24, 1982, Reagan declared war on the drug trade and created a new White House Office of Drug Abuse Policy. Reagan said, "We're taking down the surrender flag that has flown over so many drug efforts. We're running up the battle flag." Reagan and his wife, Nancy, went on television and spoke to the nation about the war on drugs on September 14, 1986. Out of this came the "Crusade for a Drug-Free America." Congress got tough not only on drug traffickers, but users too. In October 1986, Congress passed the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986. In October 1988, Congress passed the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988. The bill also contained new attacks on "recreational" users, including the revocation of professional licenses and stiff civil penalties for any drug offenders.³

My biggest criticisms of the Reagan administration's drug policies are the increased penalties which I believe led to higher incarceration rates that included nonviolent drug users.

According to Pew Research and many other sources, the country saw a sharp growth in overall incarceration between 1980 and 1997. By 2008 that number rose to 2.3 million. The incarceration rate rose from 310 per 100,000 people to 1,000 people in the same period.

According to statistics from the World Prison Brief, the United States has the

highest prison population of any country in the world, despite not having the highest population in the world. There are 2.1 million people in prison in the United States which has a population of 325 million people, compared to 1.6 million in China, a country that has a population of 1.38 billion people.⁴

Reagan, Nicaragua, Iran and Drugs

The Reagan Administration believed that political changes taking place in Nicaragua and Iran in the 1970s threatened U.S. national interests.

In Nicaragua, a socialist movement (the Sandinistas) seized power in 1979. The Administration feared the spread of socialism in Latin America. To combat the spread of socialism in South America, Reagan backed the Contras who sought to overthrow this revolutionary regime.

There was upheaval taking place in 1979. Power changed hands in Iran when a radical Islamic movement overthrew the Shah of Iran, a U.S.-backed dictator. The new government was unfriendly toward the United States and appeared to align with the Soviet Union. Reagan tried to back moderate elements within Iran, but this policy became more complicated when Iranian-backed terrorist seized American hostages.⁵

The overthrow of the Shah of Iran was the beginning of the crappola hitting the fan. If I told you today that there was strong evidence that the Central Intelligence Agency ignored accusations of drug dealing by operatives it was working with, you might call me crazy. The question is, did it happen?

The answer is it did. In Reagan's push back against the communist backed Sandinista government in Nicaragua, some of the C.I.A.-backed contras funded their cause through drug dealing. This fact was noted in a 1988 Senate subcommittee report.

THE BLOW UP

Things really blew up when Gary Webb, a journalist at The San Jose Mercury News, after first not believing the story, began to investigate. In 1995 through 1996, he produced and reported a three-part series called "Dark Alliance."

His ground-breaking series was the first to blow up on the new worldwide web. Gary was first celebrated, then investigated, and at the end, discredited. After being pushed out of journalism in disgrace, he committed suicide in 2004. Webb was found dead in his Carmichael home on December 10, 2004, with two gunshot wounds to the head. His death was ruled a suicide by the Sacramento County coroner's office.⁶

The movie "Kill the Messenger" decidedly remains in Gary's corner. Rival newspapers, government officials and his own newspaper, threw him under the bus. It can be said that there were flaws in his investigation techniques, and even in parts of his writing, but that doesn't mean that he was wrong.

I was both a witness and a victim in the 80s of being arrested on suspicion of drug use at a higher rate than whites. This bias and racist law that began under the Reagan Administration led to a rapid rise in incarcerations for nonviolent drug offenses.

from page 6

Gary then wrote, “Dark Alliance: The C.I.A., The Contras and the Crack Cocaine Explosion,” after which, Nick Schou, a journalist, who covered parts of Webb’s downfall, wrote “Kill the Messenger: How the C.I.A.’s Crack Cocaine Controversy Destroyed Journalist Gary Webb.” Both books made the argument that journalism ate itself while the government got away.

Gary’s real trouble began 10 years later, when he began to tie cocaine imports from people connected to the Contras, to the crisis of crack cocaine in large cities, like Los Angeles. Gary began to follow the trail of that connection which led him to a guy by the name of “Freeway” Ricky Ross, a drug boss in Los Angeles, who flooded the streets with crack. He then drew a line from Ross to the C.I.A.-backed Contras, writing that court records show that the cash Ross paid for the cocaine was used to buy weapons and equipment for a guerrilla army named the Fuerza Democrática Nicaragüense,” or the FDN, one of several contra groups.

The Dark Alliance three-part series promised to reveal how “a drug network opened the cocaine pipeline from Colombian cocaine cartels and the black neighborhoods of Los Angeles, known as the ‘crack’ capital of the world.” It is believed to be the first newspaper series to go viral before there was even a terminology or an understanding of the word “viral.”

At first, news outlets shrugged, but leaders of the drug-ridden communities did not. However, Gary never suggested that the C.I.A. had deliberately set out to addict urban black populations. But black communities believed that the C.I.A. did exactly that.

The Democratic Representative of California, Maxine Waters, led protests by the Congressional Black Caucus. Comedian Dick Gregory was arrested for attempting to put crime tape at the door of C.I.A. headquarters.

THE DENIAL, THEN THE PROOF

But Mr. Webb’s victory lap was short lived, as other news organizations responded with significant stories, and his editors at The Mercury News backed away slowly, then all at once. In 1997, Gary’s newspaper published a letter to its readers, signed by the executive editor at the time, Jerry Ceppos. Ceppos wrote “I feel that we did not have proof that top C.I.A. officials knew of the relationship” between members of a drug ring and Contra leaders paid by the C.I.A., adding that the series “erroneously implied” that the connection between Mr. Ross and Nicaraguan traffickers “was the pivotal force in the crack epidemic in the United States.”

Peter Landesman, an investigative journalist who wrote the screenplay for “Kill the Messenger,” said, “Planeloads of weapons were sent south from the U.S., and everyone knows that those planes didn’t come back empty, but the C.I.A. made sure that they never knew for sure what was in those planes,” he said. “But instead of going after that, they went after Webb, who didn’t really know what he had gotten into or where he was. The most surprising thing in doing the work to write this movie is how easy it was to destroy Gary Webb.”

Gary died alone, but he lived long enough to know that he did not make the whole thing up. Frederick P. Hitz, the C.I.A. inspector general in 1998, testi-

fied before the House Intelligence Committee that after looking into the matter at length, in his opinion the C.I.A. was a bystander — or worse — in the war on drugs. Hitz, said, “Let me be frank about what we are finding,” he said. “There are instances where the C.I.A. did not, in an expeditious or consistent fashion, cut off relationships with individuals supporting the Contras program who were alleged to have engaged in drug-trafficking activity, or take action to resolve the allegations.” However dark or extensive, the alliance Mr. Webb wrote about, was real.⁷

There are more rumblings in the American social structure of the 80s that is looking and sounding like the 60s when the Nixon Administration used drug policy to discredit and damage its citizens. John Erlichman gave an interview admitting to the lies the Nixon Administration used against Americans he deemed to be political enemies. Erlichman said, “You want to know what this was really all about? The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left (young white people) and black people (demanding civil rights). Do you understand what I’m saying? We knew we couldn’t make it illegal to be either against the war or blacks, but by getting the public to associate the hippies (young white people) with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course, we did.”⁸

Sources

- ¹ President’s Advisory Commission on Narcotics and Drug Abuse, 1963:1
- ² <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/crime-history-richard-pryor-sets-self-on-fire>
- ³ https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1989/09/05/drug-wars-past-and-present/70f4f3f2-2727-41fe-a799-b85173879cdf/?utm_term=.065124167a4a
- ⁴ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/05/02/americas-incarceration-rate-is-at-a-two-decade-low/>
- ⁵ https://www.brown.edu/Research/Understanding_the_Iran_Contra_Affair/iran-contra-affairs.php
- ⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gary_Webb#:~:text=Webb%20was%20found%20dead%20in,the%20Sacramento%20County%20corner’s%20office
- ⁷ <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/05/movies/kill-the-messenger-recalls-a-reporter-wrongly-disgraced.html>
- ⁸ Comment about “the war on drugs” by John Ehrlichman, Former Domestic Policy Advisor to President Richard Nixon, as quoted in “Legalize It All,” Dan Baum, Harper’s Magazine, April 2016

George Lewis is founder and CEO of Motivational Consulting, Inc. and has more than 18 years of experience in the human services industry. His website is motivationalconsultinginc.com.



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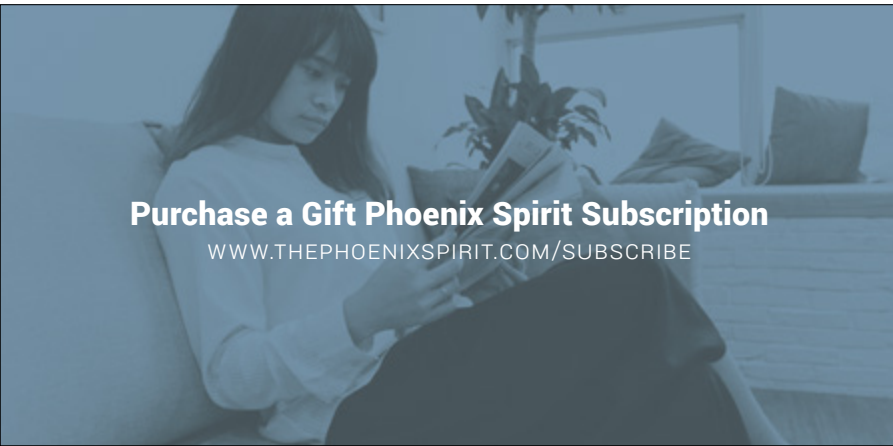
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SUPPORT GROUPS / SOME MAY BE NOT BE MEETING DUE TO COVID-19

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.

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

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: First Thursday, every other month, 6-7:30pm. 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: 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. Check website for locations and different dates and times.

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

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, Unity Church Unitarian (H), 732 Holly Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55104.

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. More locations.

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.

WEDNESDAYS

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

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.

Living Proof MN: Eating disorder online support group. 5:30-6:30pm CST, every Wednesday. Virtual with Zoom app, email for link: info@livingproofmn.com.

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

Workaholics Anonymous: A 12-Step program of recovery for people addicted to non-stop work or continuous activity. Meeting is currently online via Zoom. Call Pat for link to the meeting or questions: 763-560-5199. www.workaholics-anonymous.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

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

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 contact Judy M 612-400-2323; 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 and any schedule updates: Gretchen 615-423-9444, Liz 612-229-8930, 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 La’Tosia 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.

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.

SATURDAYS

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

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

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

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.

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

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

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.

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.

Eating Disorders Anonymous: 5-6:30pm in Eden Prairie at Wooddale Church, 6630 Shady Oak Road, 55344. Room 291. Contact Nikki: nikkiahaven@gmail.com or call 612-227-4079.

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 Benner 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@thephoenix-spirit.com. Thank you.

Coping With Another Person's Gambling Problem from page 1

SIGNS OF PROBLEM GAMBLING

The first thing that can help concerned others who have a vague notion that something is going on with their family member, spouse or friend is to learn the signs of gambling addiction. Some of the more common indications of an underlying gambling problem include increased frequency of gambling, increased amount of money gambled, gambling for longer periods of time than planned, bragging about wins but not saying anything about losses, pressuring others for money as financial problems arise, lying about how money is spent, escaping to other excesses (alcohol, drugs, sleep, etc.) and denying that there is a problem. Additional signs of problem gambling may include frequent absences from home and work, excessive phone use, withdrawal from family, personality changes (such as increased irritability and hostility) and diversion of family funds. It's also important to realize that problem gambling can affect anyone regardless of race, culture, sex and financial standing.

GAMBLING ADDICTION IS OFTEN A CO-OCCURRING ADDICTION

Comorbidity is the term used to describe the existence of concurrent disorders in an individual. Studies have shown that people who struggle with gambling disorders tend to have other psychological problems such as depression, anxiety and substance-use disorders. For example, a survey in Psychological Medicine reported that 96 percent of lifetime compulsive gamblers also met lifetime criteria for one or more of the other psychiatric disorders assessed in the survey. If a significant other or friend in your life suffers from one type of addiction, be aware that puts them at higher risk for gambling addiction.

REALIZE YOU'RE NOT ALONE

It can be difficult for the concerned others of gamblers to come to grips with the situation. They may question their role and feel they are responsible. They may be in disbelief as they learn that bank accounts and retirement savings have been wiped out.

It's important to know that you're not alone. With an estimated 6 million of the general population at risk for developing gambling addiction, there are many people who find themselves in the orbit of a gambler. Organizations such as Gam-Anon provide assistance and comfort to those affected by someone else's gambling problem. It provides a way to share experiences, gain strength and create hope in coping with the problem gambler.

Concerned others often feel like that they cannot tell friends and, in some cases, family, about the situation. Keeping the secret becomes yet another stress. In addition to Gam-Anon, one way to alleviate some of the stress of keeping secrets, as well as the shame and isolation, is to connect with a trusted community elder or faith leader, who can help support concerned others.

IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

Frequently, family members are in denial. Some family members, not fully understanding the severity of the situation, think that they are helping by bailing out the gambler, yet they are not seeing the ramifications it has for the spouse. Additionally, lack of communication is emotionally straining and isolating for concerned others.

A big part of recovery for both the gambler and family is honesty and trust. The lies and broken trust from the problem gambler can be difficult to repair. However, it's an essential part of a gambler's recovery to be honest and to have open communication. Most people benefit from having someone to facilitate those initial conversations.

HOW TO START A CONVERSATION WITH A PROBLEM GAMBLER

Talking with someone you know about a potential gambling problem can be difficult. It's important to remember that you can't stop someone from gambling; only they can make that decision. Choose the right moment to have the conversation, and speak in a caring and understanding tone. Make sure that you hear what the other person is saying.

To start the conversation:

- Tell the person you care about them and that you're concerned about their actions.
- Tell the person exactly what they have done that concerns you.
- Tell the person how their behavior is affecting other people and be specific about what you expect from them ("I want you to talk to someone about your gambling") and what they can expect from you ("I won't cover for you anymore").
- After you've told the person what you've seen and how you feel, allow them to respond and listen with a non-judgmental attitude.
- Let the person know you are willing to help, but don't try to counsel them yourself.
- Give the person information, not advice.
- Encourage them to call the toll-free helpline.

For specific advice on how to approach a problem gambler, call the Minnesota gambling helpline at 1-800-333-HOPE to talk with a certified counselor. The helpline operates 24-hours a day, seven days a week. All calls are confidential.

TALKING TO CHILDREN

The children of problem gamblers often receive less attention and nurturing at home as a result of the amount of time the parents spend gambling. This can lead to feelings of abandonment, anger or depression, and the children may blame themselves for problems in the home. This can result in the child withdrawing or acting out.

Children who grow up in a household with a problem gambler are also at higher risk of developing a gambling problem later in life. Having the love and support of a caring adult will improve their chances of living a more balanced life.

Children often get confused about their feelings for a parent who has a gambling problem. That's why it's important that they understand that gambling is only one part of their parent's overall behavior, and that it's okay to love someone even though certain things they do are upsetting.

To help avoid these problems, children should be told about their parent's problem in an age-appropriate way. The key points of the conversations should include:

- A parent/loved one is struggling with a gambling problem, but they still love their family.
- It is not the child's fault that there is a problem, and they are not responsible

Bami Soro
By George Lewis

A WORKBOOK FOR
Healing Professionals
WORKING WITH
AMERICANS OF
AFRICAN ANCESTRY.

THERE'S A COMMUNICATION **G A P** BECAUSE OF
RACISM AND BIAS IN THIS COUNTRY.

If you're a professional working with Americans of African Ancestry, cultural bias is the 'ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM'. It's getting in the way of helping clients, patients, students, and even the recovery community. The communication divide needs to be addressed if effective education, treatment, and healing is to be provided.

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for fixing it.

- There is a problem, but adults are taking care of it.
- They can feel better by talking about their feelings.
- Treatment for their parent is available and works.
- If the child is old enough, discuss upcoming lifestyle changes; however, reinforce the message that it is not the child's responsibility to worry about the family's finances.

Children need to feel safe and secure. This is accomplished, in part, by establishing a sense of structure and consistency in their lives through regular routines and activities. Parents can help by spending more time with their children and making sure they have people in their lives who they can feel "safe" talking to — even when those people are not the parents themselves.

PROTECTING ASSETS

Unfortunately, by the time families discover their loved one's gambling problem, financial losses may already be significant. Bankruptcy or failure to make mortgage payments, car payments, college tuition, etc., may be part of the new reality. Families need to protect themselves before the gambler can deplete their family assets. Limiting or prohibiting access to family assets may be the first necessary step to take if the family hopes to rebound.

Another protection that families can take is the use of software that blocks access to gambling sites. Northstar Problem Gambling Alliance offers one such tool, Gamban, at no cost to Minnesota families who are interested. The subscriptions are effective for one year, can include up to 15

devices per household, and can block tens of thousands of online gambling sites.

FINANCIAL COUNSELING

For families whose finances have been wracked by a problem gambler, developing a personal financial recovery plan is an important first step. Such a plan should include:

- Comparison of expense and debt obligations with income.
- A list of debt (creditor, balance, payment, status and timeline).
- Devising strategies to change income, change expenses or both when expenses exceed income.
- Identification of a trusted family member or friend to assist management of personal finances.
- A resource list of current, reliable and free financial references.
- Follow-up consultation with a financial counselor during transition to life after treatment program.

THERE IS HOPE AND THE TREATMENT WORKS

The most important thing to remember if someone close to you has a gambling problem is that there is hope — for you and the gambler. Minnesota provides treatment for both gamblers and affected others, usually at no cost. Take the first step by calling the Minnesota gambling helpline at 800-333-HOPE.

For more information about problem gambling in Minnesota, visit northstarpg.org.



Jessica Nelson-Mitchell, LADC Fairview Recovery Services

Jessica Nelson-Mitchell is a state of Minnesota Gambling Treatment Provider and a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor. She is currently working towards her Masters Degree in Marriage and Family Therapy. She has been providing support to individuals and families in a variety of environments, including inpatient and outpatient settings within substance use disorders and she currently works as the family counselor in the outpatient Gambling Treatment Program at Fairview Recovery Services.

PROBLEM GAMBLING RECOVERY

Ask the Expert

We'll feature an expert in the mental health and/or substance use disorder fields to answer questions

We are seeing an increase of gambling within video games with loot boxes and even in game casinos. Gamers are able to spend real money to win “in game prizes” which do not have value outside of the game itself.

Q What are some signs that gambling has become problematic?

Problem gambling has many of the same patterns and behaviors as other addictions, such as increased tolerance, unsuccessful efforts to cut down or quit, a great deal of time is spent in the activity, and even the same type of withdrawal symptoms. Cross addiction is used to define when one addiction is then transferred to another addiction. It's not uncommon for people entering into treatment from alcohol or other substances to continue gambling. We do encourage those in both early and long-term recovery to abstain from any forms of gambling due to an increased vulnerability to transferring those behaviors. Many people in recovery, and even recovery professionals, often don't see gambling as an addiction because they are not ingesting a substance. But the brain is being triggered the same as if you were snorting cocaine.

Q Who is at risk for compulsive gambling?

Studies have shown that anyone who has a history of addiction is at risk for cross addiction. Research continues to show a genetic disposition to addiction in families, which includes gambling addiction. Those who grew up and were exposed to substance use addictions may make the decision not to use substances. However, they may not identify gambling as a possible addiction. Gambling is often referred to as a “hidden addiction,” because a family member is able to hide the amount of gambling, or the amount of money spent gambling, through lies and deception until the family is in dire straits, and the gambler has stolen, or is on the verge of suicide.

With the increase of gambling and real money spending in video games, we are seeing an increase in teens becoming compulsive gamblers. Quite often, they are being groomed in video games to need the dopamine hit they get from the in-game stimuli.

Q What mental health disorders do you see within compulsive gamblers?

Most of our clients come in with anxiety and depression. There is also a higher rate of suicide with problem gamblers than with other addictions. It may be that the gambling increases the dopamine in the brain, as a reward, much the same way that cocaine or amphetamines do. Or it may be that suicide solves the financial problem that the gambler got themselves into. The amount of shame and guilt we see in problem gamblers is higher than other addictions. It's not uncommon for clients to tell stories of leaving the casino with thoughts of suicide, as there is so much desperation after losing thousands of dollars, again.

Q What are some of the current interventions and treatments available for people who struggle with compulsive gambling and helpful resources?

It's important to know that treatment options are available in the state of Minnesota. Current treatments include inpatient, outpatient and individual counseling/therapy with state certified problem gambling treatment providers. The state of Minnesota, Department of Human Services, offers a grant to those who qualify to help to pay the costs of treatment. The Department of Human Services website has a list of gambling treatment providers and are able to utilize this grant to cover the cost of treatments. Visit: <https://getgamblinghelp.com> or 1-800-333-HELP.

Support groups are also available through Gamblers Anonymous. Many meetings are currently held online, although there are a few that are able to accommodate social distancing and are meeting in-person. Check the Gamblers Anonymous meeting directory online <http://www.minnesotaga.com> to find the most accurate meeting information.

Q What are some actions that a family member or friend can take if they are concerned about their loved one's gambling?

It's difficult to have a family member who is struggling and changes the dynamics of the family. There are resources for family members including utilizing the list of state certified treatment providers for individual counseling. A grant through the Department of Human Services is also available for family members to seek support regardless of if their family member or friend chooses to seek treatment. Gam-Anon at <https://www.gam-anon.org> is a great resource for support meetings as well.

Money can often be a trigger for problem gamblers. Limiting access to cash and setting up additional financial blockades will help to reduce the urge to gamble and the damage caused if the gambler does gamble. If the gambler is willing, the website <https://www.truelinkfinancial.com> offers a credit card specifically for people in recovery to limit access to cash and the ability to spend money gambling.

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.

Q What are some of the different ways that people gamble?

Many people associate gambling with the casinos, but gambling is much broader than that. There are many forms of legal and illegal gambling in Minnesota. Gambling can include, but is not limited to, poker, lottery games, raffles, sports betting, and even trading in the stock market. Minnesotans spend over a billion dollars a year on pull tabs alone. Not only do people gamble on the big game, but they may also gamble on the outcome of the coin toss that opens the game.

The prevalence of problem gambling is about 3 percent of the population, with as high as 5 percent among college males. Currently, sports betting has become popular among college age students; prior to that it was poker, or Texas hold'em.

Being able to gamble online and on our phones has increased the accessibility of gambling, especially in a pandemic.

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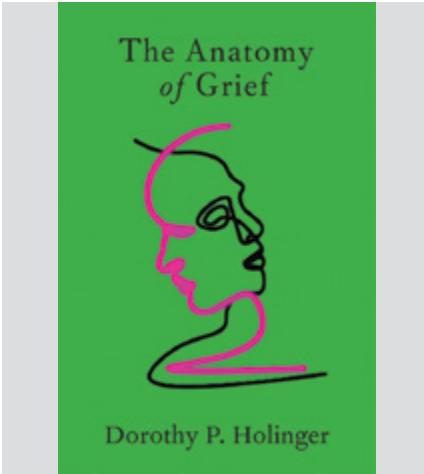


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Books



Anatomy of Grief

By Dorothy P. Holinger
YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Grief happens to everyone. Universal and enveloping, grief cannot be ignored or denied.

This original new book by psychologist Dorothy P. Holinger uses humanistic and physiological approaches to describe grief's impact on the bereaved. Taking examples from literature, music, poetry, paleoarchaeology, personal experience, memoirs, and patient narratives, Holinger describes what happens in the brain, the heart, and the body of the bereaved.



This One's For You

An Inspirational Journey Through Addiction, Death & Meaning

By Jeff Johnston
CHOICES NETWORK, LTD

On the morning of October 4, 2016, business owner Jeff Johnston got the call that no parent wants to get.

Jeff Johnston's book about his family's journey, is an inspiring and much-needed reminder to parents who are wrestling with addiction in their sons and daughters that they are not alone and that it is not their fault.

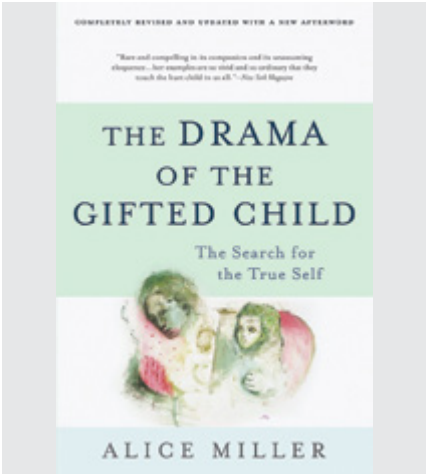


Under Our Roof

A Son's Battle for Recovery, a Mother's Battle for Her Son

By Madeleine Dean and Harry Cunnane
RANDOM HOUSE

Under Our Roof is the story of a national crisis suffered in the intimacy of so many homes, told with candor through the dual perspectives of a mother rising in politics and a son living a double life, afraid of what would happen if his secret were exposed. In this memoir, they discuss the patterns of a family dealing with an unspoken disease, the fear that keeps addicts hiding in shame, and the moments of honesty, faith, and personal insight that led to Harry's recovery.



The Drama of the Gifted Child

The Search for the True Self

By Alice Miller
HATCHETTE BOOK GROUP

Why are many of the most successful people plagued by feelings of emptiness and alienation? This wise and profound book has provided thousands of readers with an answer—and has helped them to apply it.

Alice Miller has achieved worldwide recognition for her work on the causes and effects of childhood traumas.

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

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Nothing

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No matter how you say it, treatment for gambling addiction is available often at No Cost to gamblers and their families in Minnesota.



Produced through a grant from the Minnesota Department of Human Services

Call 1-800-333-4673 (HOPE) or Visit NorthstarPG.org

FROM THE STATE OF MINNESOTA



Problem Gambling, Culturally Specific Awareness Initiative

by Nick Vega Puente



Many of our culturally specific communities, which include our racial and ethnic communities, have been marginalized far too long, and also forgotten, when it comes to health and equity, despite our efforts to reach all Minnesota communities.

Problem gambling negatively affects individuals, families, and communities in Minnesota. The behavior patterns associated with problem gambling compromise activities of daily living such as relationships, education and vocational opportunities, personal and financial well-being, substance use, emotional stability, physical health, and housing.

Problem gambling also impacts families and other loved ones. It contributes to chaos and dysfunction within the family, can contribute to separation and divorce, and is associated with child and spousal neglect and abuse. Family members may have depressive or anxiety disorders and/or abuse substances. People often hide gambling problems from their families, thus called the “hidden addiction.” Disclosing the gambling secret can be devastating to relationships, leading to resentment and loss of trust. The financial difficulties created by problem gambling can be disastrous to all: The individual, their spouses, and children.

SO WHAT IS THE STATE OF MINNESOTA DOING TO RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF THOSE EXPERIENCING PROBLEM GAMBLING?

Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, section 245.98, the Department of Human Services, Behavioral Health Division (DHS/BHD) is charged with administering a program which funds awareness and education campaigns, a statewide helpline, residential and non-residential treatment for problem gambling, professional training opportunities and research designed to address the needs of Minnesota communities experiencing problem gambling.

One of the initiatives we would like to highlight during this year’s Problem Gambling Awareness Month is a new statewide awareness initiative: The Problem Gambling Culturally Specific Awareness Initiative.

WHAT IS THE CULTURALLY SPECIFIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN INITIATIVE AND WHAT MAKES IT UNIQUE?

Firstly, DHS/BHD has historically funded a Statewide Awareness Campaign in partnership with Russell Herder, Inc., a marketing firm based in Minneapolis. This partnership has produced some great marketing strategies using multiple platforms for delivering gambling awareness and prevention messages.

The Problem Gambling Culturally Specific Awareness Initiative is unique in the sense that it’s a new approach to getting the word out about the harmful effects of problem gambling in ways that are most understandable to, and likely to be well received by, the different communities that live in Minnesota. Many of our culturally specific communities, which include our racial and ethnic communities, have been marginalized far too long, and also forgotten, when it comes to health and equity, despite our efforts to reach all Minnesota communities. As a result, state data related to behavioral health continue to show disparities among these populations and don’t seem to be getting any better today as this relates to the COVID-19 pandemic. While data is limited on the prevalence of problem gambling among culturally specific communities, Minnesota did complete a health and wellness survey regarding problem gambling in 2020.

In 2018, DHS/BHD issued a request for proposals to fund diverse community campaigns.

BUILDING LOCAL CAPACITY

We have known that Minnesota is not made up of a homogeneous population, but a heterogeneous population that continues to change every year. There are many diverse communities in Minnesota and a one-size-fits-all approach to reaching all communities is not an effective strategy. Therefore, we need to know

who the focused populations are, including their cultures, languages, norms, and world views. And who better to inform and guide these communities than themselves? Part of the goal in establishing the Problem Gambling Culturally Specific Initiative is to build capacity at the local level, within these focused communities. We know from other behavioral health initiatives, that positive outcomes are more likely, when we educate the communities, we engage the communities, and we empower communities to drive towards their own destiny. We also know that the more buy-in that is established and the more relationships and collaborations which are established, the more likely partnerships will be sustained over time, long after a grant expires. In short, capacity is about sharing and growing knowledge and hope for health and wellness in all communities.

Our partners in this initiative include:

- **Asian Media Access**, 2418 Plymouth Avenue North, Minneapolis, MN 55411-3606
- **Progressive Individual Resources**, 2147 University Avenue W., Suite 206, St. Paul, MN 55114
- **Lao Assistance Center of Minnesota**, 1015 4th Avenue North, Suite 202, Minneapolis, MN 55404
- **Neighborhood Youth Academy**, 1505 Washington Avenue North, Minneapolis, MN 55411
- **Russell Herder**, 275 Market Street, Suite 319, Minneapolis, MN 55405

For this article, we asked our partners: **What excites you the most regarding this opportunity?**

Asian Media Access: “What most excites me about this opportunity is being able to support my communities with cultural and linguistic appropriate educational

materials about problem gambling, as well as highlighting our youth voices throughout the educational campaign.” Ange Hwang, Executive Director from Asian Media Access.

Progressive Individual Resources: “We are excited about the opportunity to engage with different groups from different parts of Africa because we are able to gain insight into the gambling culture of each community. This initiative will also provide us the opportunity to have concrete statistics about the prevalence of gambling addiction within the African community in Minnesota. Even though we are from different countries, we share a sense of community. There is an African proverb that says, ‘If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.’ Together we can provide resources to those who need it most and serve this community as effectively as possible.” Dr. Richard Oni and Psychotherapist Bili Banjoko, Progressive Individual Resources Inc (PIRI)

Lao Assistance Center of Minnesota: “Reshaping ways to strengthen our community by developing creative solutions that are meaningful, impactful, and culturally appropriate.” Sunny Chanthanouvong, ສົນ ຈັນທະນຸວົງສ໌, Executive Director

Minneapolis Neighborhood Youth Academy: “We are excited to continue the development of young men and women of color by providing early community-based interventions to have the greatest impact on a child’s ability to move beyond the potential barriers in their communities.” Lucas Patterson, Director of Neighborhood Youth Academy

Russell Herder: “Besides reaching thousands of Minnesota residents each month with critical information about problem

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gambling and access to treatment, we've had the profound opportunity to work within several of our state's cultural communities to learn, share and impact lives. Through authentic co-creation with our community partners, together, we're making a difference." Carol Russell, CEO of Russell Herder

It is the policy of the state of Minnesota to ensure fairness, precision, equity, and consistency in competitive grant awards. This includes implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion in grant-making, creating a field of fairness in the dissemination of public funds in the best interest of all communities. More importantly, it is the vision of the Minnesota Department of Human Services for health equity in Minnesota, where all communities are afforded the opportunity to access culturally responsive services, where all communities are thriving, and all people have what they need to live a healthy life.

Achieving health equity means creating the conditions in which all people can attain their highest possible level of health. To achieve these goals, we believe we need to tap into the richness that these communities bring to reaching individuals and families in their respective communities. Language, culture, norms, beliefs, world views and lived experiences matter when designing problem gambling prevention messages and intervention and treatment services. The Problem Gambling Culturally Specific Awareness Initiative has allowed DHS/BHD the opportunity to partner with four community, culturally-based organizations to help us reach their respective communities. In launching this initiative, DHS/BHD meets our commitment to implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion in grant-making and in the dissemination of public funds and meets our collective vision for health equity in Minnesota.

Nick Vega Puente is the manager of the Promotion, Prevention and Infrastructure Development Unit, Behavioral Health Division, Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Asian Media Access




Asian Media Access

Lao Assistance Center of MN



Neighborhood Youth Academy



Progressive Individual Resources




Hope and a future

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from page 1

Learning How to Trust

We become like the broken-winged bird above who cannot hold fast to dreams. Let us not be a broken-winged bird. Let us learn how to trust in a realistic, empowering way. We actually really do need each other, including those whom we disagree with. We need to have faith in our own judgments, even when they are imperfect.

WHAT IS TRUST AND WHY IT IS SO IMPORTANT?

Trust is the process in relationships where we have faith in others to authentically care about our well-being and safety, as we do for their safety and well-being. It requires the passage of time and persistent efforts to handle adversity to know if we truly have faith in others. Such goals require both an open heart on our part and reliable behaviors by others. Those we trust do not have to be in our family, but they are vital for our sense of personal security. In fact, because we are wired by evolution to be social creatures, we need to trust others. Such relationships give our life meaning and help us feel less alone. We have physical responses to people we trust. Our eyes get larger and we have smile reflexes when we recognize someone we trust. Trust becomes part of our memory bank. We carry others we trust inside us even when they are not in our presence. We can feel the calm of their memory. Those of us who can't trust often feel alone, depressed and empty.

WHY DO WE HAVE PERSISTENT TRUST PROBLEMS WITH OTHERS?

Some people have repetitive trust problems with others, no matter how kind or responsible other people are. They seem to be suspicious and resistant to any form of caring. They may find imperfections in any form of kindness expressed to them and are very hard to love. Often, they are rebels and loners and may engage in needless, impulsive violence. It is beyond hard to go through life while being incapable of receiving love. Some of these folks use their reactions to control others, thinking it is better to beat them than join them. Some of us have had a disappointing experience in an adult love relationship that hampers us for life. Others with more severe trust issues have had adverse, abusive childhood experiences that are essentially burned into their brain memory even when they can't give specific examples of such behaviors. Their memories are stored in their body and behavior-

al responses to others. Even people who have not been abused may still distrust others when they have been emotionally neglected or exploited, such as children of alcoholics.

Unfortunately knowing this information does not in itself fix the problem of trust. Typically, people with persistent trust issues unconsciously repeat and recreate past betrayals of trust in their current relationships, almost as if they have no other choice. This problem is called repetition compulsion. This means that people who can't trust inadvertently pick relationships in their adult lives where they are harmed or harm others as they were in their childhood. Some people can recover from this trust dilemma through intense work in psychotherapy. Other people choose to avoid such work and continue the repetitive patterns of hurtful relationships, reinforcing their beliefs that "You can't trust anybody." Like the poem above, by Langston Hughes, says, they become the broken-winged birds that cannot fly and have lost their dreams. They are inconsolable and make it impossible for others to love them.

↔

"I remember when I decided to get a new dog from the Animal Humane Society. I picked a little mutt out named Flip. I just wanted to make a difference in his life and in mine. The notice on his cage said that he had been treated harshly by his owner and would need a lot of love. Just right for me, I thought. So, when I brought Flip home and let him out of his cage the first thing that he did was hide under my bed. He stayed there for a full day. Finally, I lured him out with some dog treats. I tried to pet him, but he just growled when I got close to him. He'd grab the treat and run under my bed. I told myself that he was just scared and the kinder I was to him, the friendlier he would become over time. Wrong! Here it is two years later, and he still runs away when I'm nice to him. I figured out why he was named Flip. If you ever tried to pet him, he would



go from wagging his tail and taking your treat to biting your hand. He was actually more relaxed when I left him alone. He went from one type of dog to another for no apparent reason. Flip made me think of all the people I knew who respond badly to my friendliness. He was hard to live with, but I never blamed him for being the way he was. And he never changed no matter how nice I was to him. Some people are just easier to trust if you just leave them alone and have compassion for them."

HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN YOU HAVE TRUST ISSUES WITH OTHERS?

Usually, we know from our history when we have trust issues with others. Some of the signals are:

- a tendency to be immediately judgmental of others with no rational basis for such beliefs
- excessive idealization of people who conform to our own image of a likable person
- persistent distancing from and boredom with people we were initially close to
- inability to form long-term emotionally committed relationships
- tendency to feel suffocated by emotional demands from others
- relationship hopping and looking for the perfect partner
- continuing self-criticisms and distrust of love, especially around caring people

- plaguing feelings of emptiness and depression despite personal success
- tendency to nit-pick others who want to love us
- feelings of unworthiness around people who are nice to us

MYTHS ABOUT TRUSTING OTHERS

The following beliefs about trust are partially true but mostly inaccurate. They can easily mislead us in our life choices. They are:

"I can tell within five minutes of meeting someone if I can trust that person."

Reality: What you see in the early parts of a relationship is at best superficial. We are all a lot deeper than we seem. Others may be invested in looking good around us, perhaps because they want to impress us or want to show less of their hidden selves. The novelty of meeting a new person can be exhilarating and raise our hopes. But the true joy of knowing someone can only be real after an extensive period of time, perhaps a year or longer after weathering many rough spots together, to fully grasp what we are signing up for in a relationship. Many of us don't voluntarily try to look good, we just take longer to fully reveal all of who we are. Some people can go on for years not knowing their own hidden sides, which eventually comes out in a relationship. Others of us are faithful and stay that way forever. Relationships are best when partners can handle the ad-



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from page 14

We learn to compromise, be empathic and meet each other halfway—all the skills of a trusting relationship.

ventures and hardships of the rough seas of their togetherness with a sense of humor.

“The only people I can really trust are those in my family.”

Reality: It’s always a pleasure to have a caring family that genuinely looks out for one another. Most of us would be better served by realizing that our family relationships are very imperfect, and that the familiarity of kin can cause us to have inaccurate views of those we grew up with and of our own true potential even when we cherish our loved ones. It’s wisest to love our family members as best we can but to also expand our comfort level to include people who we are not familiar with in our chosen emotional family. Loyalty to kin will not protect us from their demons and the pride and security we have in enjoying loving relationships outside of our family. Such a chosen family can be our bedrock for life. Most of us need to honor and attend to our family and we need a chosen family to expand our comfort level and fully grow as people. Oftentimes our chosen family is more trustworthy and challenging than our family of origin. Sometimes just the opposite is true.

“If you trust someone you never have conflict with them.”

Reality: Actually, constructive conflict is a hallmark of a healthy and trustworthy relationship. It’s almost necessary for people to have differences with each other before real trust is established. How we settle our mutual conflicts is what builds the respect and authenticity of a trustworthy relationship. We learn to compromise, be empathic and meet each other halfway—all the skills of a trusting relationship. In fact, before you commit to a long-term relationship it’s best to have had at least one battle with a partner before you say “I do.” Research shows that constructive conflict is normal and healthy in relationships.

HOW DO YOU HAVE AUTHENTIC TRUST IN OTHERS?

It is always best to not judge others by

the feelings we have about them, or personal prejudices towards them or wishful thinking we have in their regard. Romantic feelings, sexual attraction, prejudice and desperation are notoriously inaccurate in how we trust others. Studies show that our realistic thinking actually gets impaired when people are “in love.” Love is blind, but not safe. The best way to know if you can trust people is to carefully observe their behaviors over time and ask about their motivation as to why they act the way they do. Science, not your gut feeling, can help you the best in knowing when to trust. It may be more fun initially to throw caution to the wind in meeting others, but it is a lot less safe to do so. The best fun we have with others is what happens in the long run with dependable people, believe me.

Realize that others adapt to how you are treating them and what they hope to get from you, so observe another person as a scientist in a variety of settings, perhaps with the assistance of your trusted friends. It’s always best to have people tell you what you don’t want to hear or what you don’t want to see before you invest your heart in another. Then you can evaluate more accurately. So be a scientist in getting to know others, ask for explanations from the person you are trying to be close to and pay attention to your gut feeling only as a way to begin the scientific exploration. If you neglect science, you are putting yourself at risk. Once trust is firmly established you will be good to go with another person. You will see that person behaving towards you in a predictable and less dangerous way. Then you can let all your enthusiasm go through the roof!

Let me say a word about distrust. It can be equally misleading as trusting another too easily. Realize that your personal history can prompt you to have many false negatives when it comes to knowing others. You may cut yourself off from knowing decent people. Such distrust has more to do with being trau-

matized by your personal history and living in your past than in your current scientific observation. This is a survival skill for us that unfortunately limits our ability to thrive and grow. It’s best to get professional help if you feel stuck in your past or even if you don’t know why you make bad choices in relationships. Most of us stumble before we can walk. If you work on yourself in therapy, you may be very surprised just how many people are out there to enjoy getting close to. Many of us face the ghosts from our past by having imperfect relationships and learning from them. There are in fact oodles of decent people to trust in this world!

“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

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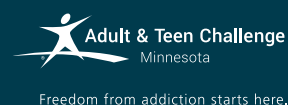


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The Time is Now

by *Mary Lou Logsdon*



"The eyes of the future are looking back at us, and they are praying for us to see beyond our own time." — TERRY TEMPEST WILLIAMS

I write this as winter's cold and ice extend across our country, shattering records unbroken for hundreds of years. Texas' whole electric grid is failing, basic heat and water cannot be delivered to its citizenry. Coronavirus vaccines are delayed due to the travel constraints of icy roads. Gas is stalled by frozen pipelines.

This disruption arrives with the season Christians call Lent, a time for resetting our compass, looking into past failures and promising fresh starts. Most religions have such a season—a time to fast, forgive, share our bounty and seek a new way forward.

The season of Lent in the northern hemisphere coincides with late winter and the mud and muck of early spring. It is a season of renewal.

Forty days are set aside. Forty echoes throughout sacred texts and the natural world. Forty days and forty nights of rain. Forty years of wandering the wilderness. Forty years in the desert. Muhammad was forty years old when he first received the revelation delivered by the archangel Gabriel. Forty weeks of pregnancy. Forty is a fullness of time. Enough to get our attention. Enough to wrap things up. Enough to change our ways.

I've received my first coronavirus vaccine. I was picked through the lottery and traversed Minneapolis to the Convention Center where a multitude of health care workers convened to march us through a streamlined process to get a shot in my left arm. Twenty eight days later I will get my second shot and fourteen days after that I will walk a little freer, able to venture out in ways the past year's restrictions have not allowed. That is a total of forty-two days. A fullness of time.

There are years when a season of sacrifice arrives at our door unexpected and uninvited, like a surprise package from an unknown sender. Dare I open this? What might it require of me? Will I be able to send it back? Last year the pandemic arrived at our door. All our denial, rage, and simple solutions could not change that.

Life's losses show up indifferent to my timetable. A cancer diagnosis. A DWI. Death of a beloved. Frozen pipes burst, flooding rooms and cutting off the water supply. The old life is gone.

There are other significant time markers. Jewish tradition marks the seven days after the burial of a loved one to sit shiva, a week of deep mourning. Thirty meetings in thirty days. A new president marks 100 days, a time of energy to begin putting promised policies in place. Like the forward to a book, they outline an agenda and give a peek at what lies ahead.

One of the challenges of this pandemic is that we don't know what that fullness of time is. How long until we no longer have to worry, to mask, to fast from hugging? How much longer do we need to hole up in our homes? When can we spring free?

Truth is we don't know how long until it's over. We don't know when spring comes until it comes. We don't know how long we will live until we find ourselves on our deathbed. We don't know how long the cravings last until they end. We look into a clouded future, murky and muddled. It is only in looking back that I see with some clarity.

That is another invitation of this season we call Lent. It is a chance to look back to see what changed, how I changed, where the road diverged and which path I chose. What challenges did the last year bring? How did I meet them?

One of the temptations of life is to be certain. Give me the formula to a good life, to a hope-filled diagnosis, to a complete family picture. I am among the first to check out a new how-to book—how to live a long healthy life, how to change in five easy steps, how to manage life's challenges.

Unfortunately, we must lean into uncertainty as we go forward. Certainty is a failed promise. If I do this or that or something else, bad things won't happen. A more useful question is what do I need in order to be ready when difficulties show up? Bad things will happen. The heat will fail. Illness will come. Love will not conquer all.

Writer Sue Monk Kidd says, "Creativity flourishes not in certainty but in questions. Growth germinates not in tent dwelling but in upheaval. Yet the seduction is always security rather than venturing, instant knowing rather than deliberate waiting."

We are in a time of deliberate waiting. Even in this waiting time we can begin to see signs of hope, like shoots of new life in my garden. And, like my garden, if I go out too soon, remove the protective mulch, plant too early, a cold wave will kill that new life and set me back weeks. Last year I lost several plants by being certain our last freeze had come. It hadn't.

I love a pristine winter day, fresh snow clinging to trees, animal tracks across the yard, crisp fresh air. I also love a sunny spring day with purple crocuses blooming, robins digging for worms, cardinals calling for mates. The problem is, to get from that white winter day to the green spring one we have to go through the messiness of March with lingering piles of grey snow, sloppy mud puddles and slippery patches of ice. It's messy and disheveled, like my kitchen after a family gathering. But it's the only way to get to spring.

Like children on a car trip, we keep asking, when will this be over? When will we get there? How much longer?

I now see these periods of unknowing, that space between then and now, as a fullness of time. I remember preparing for surgery, not knowing how I would feel, how long my recuperation would take, when, or if, I would return to normal. It took as long as my body needed. Looking back I see that it wasn't really that long. It just felt like it in the middle, when I didn't know when it would end.

When you look back, do you remember being in a March-like space? Maybe it was becoming sober, recognizing your own codependency, realizing that this job, this relationship, this way of life was not working. You came to see that this was the time. The right time. The now time. Your future self knew it was time. You listened.

Mary Lou Logsdon is a Spiritual Director in the Twin Cities. She teaches in the Sacred Ground Spiritual Direction Formation Program. She can be contacted at logsdon.marylou@gmail.com.