

WHAT'S INSIDE

Letter From the Editor / 3

Chat With a Helper:
Helping Children Grieve / 4

Commentary From MN's
Office of Addiction and
Recovery Director / 7

Gift Guide / 8-9

How One Woman Turned
Sobriety into Statewide
Hope / 10-11

12-Step Corner / 11

From the State of MN / 13

Beginner's Mind / 14

Support Groups / 15



HOLIDAY EXPECTATIONS

by Angelo Gentile

Don't look now, but the holidays are nearly here. And while it can often be a joyful time, those in recovery find that the season can also bring challenges, even threats to one's sobriety, making the holidays especially tricky.

Triggers are everywhere, a recovery center blog post recently pointed out. Holiday gatherings, family parties, frequent drinking to excess — *New Year's Eve, anyone?* — and even TV commercials glorify drinking and partying.

Complicated family dynamics can be another factor, the blog post noted; Seeing friends and family members during family gatherings can bring up old emotions or unresolved issues.

"Those situations could be stressful," Amy Krentzman, associate professor and director of research for the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota, said in a recent interview with *The Phoenix Spirit*. "It might mean being in the company of individuals who conjure up some negative emotions ... conflict, stress, old history ... it can create a feeling of needing to be guarded, to shore yourself up to be in their company."

Still another challenge can emerge with a change in routine, which often occurs during the holidays, Krentzman said. "It can mean that someone is either busier than usual doing their job and planning for the holidays, or traveling, or they may have more time on their hands than they usually have." Either way, those in recovery might find that their usual 12-step meetings and support connections may be fewer during the holidays.

Finally, related to all of these stressors, holiday expectations in general can be the biggest challenge worth noting. People tend to want holiday festivities to be perfect, and when they're not, things can get messy. In addition, old traditions or memories can be painful. Plus, for those in recovery, dealing with family and friends' expectations can be tough to live up to during the holidays.

Conversely, those in recovery may have unrealistic expectations of others during the holidays. In other words, "Just because you have holiday music playing in the background doesn't mean that mom is capable of loving and being present

SEEKING HAPPIER HOLIDAYS to pg 6



SPOTLIGHT ON RECOVERY

Healing in the Woods: How One Woman Turned Sobriety into Statewide Hope

Jode Freyholtz-London, founder of Wellness in the Woods, a Recovery Community Organization (RCO), shares her recovery journey and career path. Her story begins in a small town with good intentions and unspoken pain.

Read more on page 10

The News of My Demise Has Been Greatly Exaggerated

JOHN H. DRIGGS

Some of you may have learned that I had a terrible head accident in July 2024 and was forced to retire from my private practice and license of 44 years. Although I am partially competent to practice, I was unable to walk and hear properly, sit for long periods of time and concentrate on what was being said. I was discovered by a beloved client as I was lying and bleeding on the floor before his appointment. He got me immediate help. I am eternally grateful to him. When my condition was fully diagnosed it turned out that I had a rare hidden neurological condition that preceded my fall. It is called Diffuse Idiopathic Skeletal Hyperostosis (DISH). It is a rare type of arthritis that causes your soft tissues — ligaments, tendons and joints — to stiffen and calcify. Basically the insides of my spinal column get choked off by this calcification and I lose functioning in my central nervous system, risking paralysis. It was not a pretty picture. You may also get bone spurs, which can cause pain and other symptoms and cause you to lose your balance. Treatment is exercise and pain relief as needed and a spinal operation.

I saw it as God had other plans for me than where I thought that I was going—that this condition is just another challenge for me. I would not die from DISH and my suffering was no different than what my clients brought to me every day. I let my clients of 44 years teach me how to overcome these challenges with God as my ally. Afterall, I had witnessed their struggles and triumphs all these years. I was immensely grateful for all the support and love I received.

Well, it has worked! I am not dead! I am thriving! I can walk, stay balanced and think clearly as I ever have. Most of my recovery is due to my loving and skilled doctors, tons of physical therapy and the profound devotion of my wife and readers of *The Phoenix Spirit*. Like many forms of suffering it was all a gift of God. So, I will continue writing for *The Phoenix Spirit* with a newer, deeper understanding. You are not going to get rid of me that fast!

JOHN DRIGGS to pg 12



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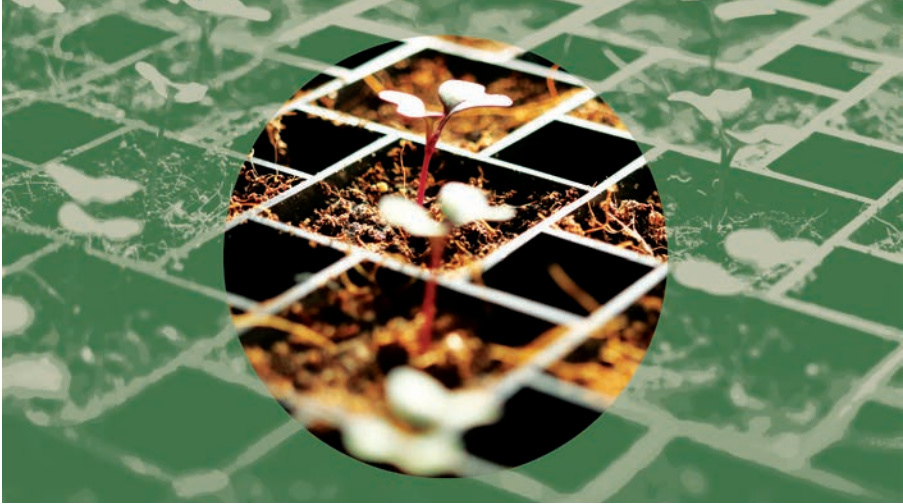
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The Power of Patience

by Sharon Chapman

“Our patience will achieve more than our force.”
EDMUND BURKE (1729-1797)



Patience is a virtue – or gift – that many people lack in our modern-day society. We have got used to receiving packages direct to our door with Amazon’s next day delivery, worldwide news streaming live to our phones, and instant messages dinging constantly from friends. Gone are the days when it took weeks – if not months—to find out news from the other side of the world, experience small joys through a “snail mail” package, and delight in the act of calling a friend on the landline. With this comes an impatient society.

So how do I practice patience? I like to literally ground myself in the garden to remind myself of what patience gives us. A seed will bring forth life when it is ready; a blossom will only bloom when the conditions are “right.” It doesn’t matter if I forgot to put the seed in the ground when I should have done – it’s not going to hurry, just because I didn’t.

As a botanical perfumer, I am reminded of the movement called “slow living” – a return to a time when things didn’t move at lightning speed. And patience was a given. Take, for example, the

iris root. The iris root stores one of the most expensive commodities for perfume making. But you wouldn’t know that unless you had patience. At its source, the root is not scented. It takes several years for it to develop through growth, curing, and processing before you get even a whiff of this sought-after aromatic extract. That’s patience.

Society seems to be looking for quick fix solutions to almost everything – yet the world has more problems now than it ever did. Is it because we gave up on patience and didn’t think through consequences before acting?

Patience is a gift. And at this, often stressful, and busy time of the year, having patience for the busy, overworked sales assistant, the worn-out mom, the aging parent, and over-excited child may just help to lessen the load. Angry words and irritability can revisit trauma, provoke PTSD, and push someone back into bad habits.

Practice patience this holiday season and see what changes.

May patience return us to the world of slow living.

Sharon

Practice patience this holiday season and see what changes.

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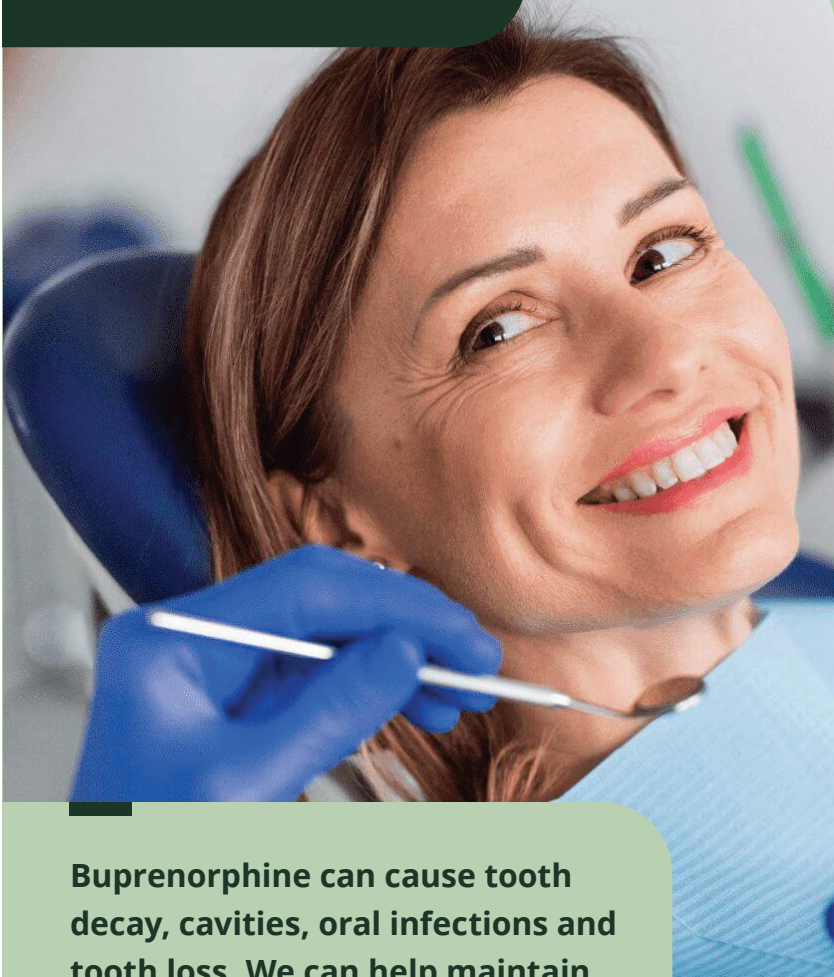
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Dr. Karl Anderson holds a Dental and Masters of Science degree from the University of Minnesota Dental school. He received training at UCLA in the early eighties in Branemark surgical training course, and he is a graduate of the Misch Institute. His specialty degree is in the field of periodontics. Dr. Anderson has placed and restored dental implants since 1985. He has been involved in the development of several implant products. He is a recovering alcoholic with long term sobriety who is passionate about helping others.

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Carolyn Kinzel MSHS, President/ Founder

Carolyn is the Founder and President of Brighter Days Family Grief Center, a Minnesota-based nonprofit dedicated to providing no-cost grief support and programs for children and adults who are grieving the death or terminal diagnosis of a loved one. Motivated by her own personal experiences with grief, Carolyn established a holistic care model that addresses not only the emotional aspects of grief but also the logistical and financial challenges faced by grieving families.

Q What led you to found Brighter Days Family Grief Center, and how did your own family's experience with loss shape your mission?

The vision for Brighter Days Family Grief Center began in 2010, sparked by the deaths of my colleague's wife and son. As I searched for resources to support him and his daughter, I was struck by how difficult it was to find immediate, accessible help that wasn't limited to just grief counseling.

Over time, my personal journey deepened that vision. At the tender age of 12, my son lost his father, and I found myself navigating a system that was not built to support families. My son needed much more than grief counseling; he needed compassionate teachers and peers that were educated on grief, and a community of other kids who understood what it was like to lose a parent.

EXPLORING CHILDHOOD GRIEF

Chat With a Helper

For me, I was navigating the logistics of his father's death while feeling truly inept as a parent to fully understand how to support him. What I didn't understand then but came to realize later was that I needed an advocate.

I later married a widower whose children had lost their mother at the ages of 8 and 13, and our layered experiences revealed the profound gaps in support, not just emotionally, but financially, logistically, and psychosocially. That's why our model is like no other; it is rooted in these lived experiences and designed to address the full spectrum of challenges families face. Today, we train other grief centers on this approach, advocating not just for emotional healing, but for the practical, everyday realities that grieving families face.

Q Statistics show that 1 in 14 Minnesota youth will lose a parent or sibling by the age of 18. Why is it so important for communities to recognize and respond to children's grief?

Children's grief is often invisible, yet its impact is profound and lasting. Every year, the statistics shift, and every year we hope to see greater awareness within our schools and communities. The harsh but real truth is that young grievers cannot begin to adjust to the void in their lives when the people and environments they return to, such as school, church, or extracurricular activities, don't have the proper support in place.

When grief is met with silence or discomfort, it isolates not just the child, but the entire family. This is why we believe that early education and awareness are critical. When we teach children how to talk about their grief to adults and peers who listen with compassion, we start to shape a society that leads with empathy and understanding. When grief and trauma go unaddressed, they can lead to lifelong emotional, physical, and mental health challenges.

Q Many people assume kids are "resilient" and will naturally bounce back after a loss. What are some of the biggest misconceptions you encounter about how children grieve?

One of the most common misconceptions about children and grief is the idea that they are naturally resilient, and that they will simply bounce back after a loss. Grief is a profound life experience, and children are not immune to its impact. While they may move fluidly between emotions of sadness, anger, joy, and even silliness, emotional flexibility is often mistaken for healing.

Additionally, society suggests that if children have strong parental role models, they will be just fine, but those role models are often grieving, too. Expecting parents to carry the emotional weight for the entire family without support is unrealistic and unfair.

What children truly need is a community of care comprised of education, resources, and safe spaces where grief is acknowledged and compassionately addressed. Equally important is that children witness their other family members experiencing this kind of support as well. This is essentially why we are a family grief center and not a counseling clinic. Grief doesn't disappear but when children are given the language, tools, and relationships to navigate it, from the adults in their lives who are using those same skills too, they are far more likely to develop healthy coping strategies.

Q What are some of the signs and symptoms that a child may be struggling with grief?

It's easy to assume that any type of behavior change is a sign that a child is struggling with grief, but it's not always that simple. We should consider their age, developmental stage, and whether this be-

havior was present before the loss. Were they academically strong prior to the death and now struggling to focus? Did they adore sleepovers at their best friend's home and now don't want to leave their parent overnight? If it is new or intensified behavior, it may be grief related.

At the same time, children don't just bounce back and the death of a loved one, and the change in family dynamics, routine, and general mood in the home can bring confusion and sadness. In other words, it's so important to give them permission to feel what they feel, and to equip them with the tools to navigate those emotions in healthy ways. Life has changed drastically, and they deserve to have time and space to come to terms with it.

Q If grief isn't addressed in childhood, how might it affect someone later in life, including struggles with mental health or substance use?

I think this is by far one of the most common misconceptions of the cyclical nature of grief. If one is walking around with unaddressed grief and trauma, it can become toxic in our relationships, careers, mental and physical health.

To address it is not just about going to a therapy session. Addressing it in all aspects of their life is equally important because you can have the best grief counselor but still have no one else in your life who understands how to support you. The longer our society fears and misunderstands grief, the more we give grievers no choice but to isolate. Our work at the center is about educating them to understand that there is no fictional timeline in which they will be "over" their grief; we help them learn how to carry it throughout their life with age-appropriate tools that can guide them.

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from page 4

Q How can parents, caregivers, or teachers best support a grieving child, especially when they may be grieving themselves?

As the adults most present in a grieving child's life, education and awareness about how grief can affect a child at different ages is so important. For teachers, we host a free virtual webinar, "How to Support Grieving Students" that anyone is welcome to join. We also offer tailored trainings for schools/districts and are happy to discuss how we can implement grief support and education within the schools.

For parents, we offer a virtual webinar "How to support your grieving child while you're grieving too." It is so important to find support for yourself and for your children, so that you are not carrying it alone. One of the most powerful things you can do for your child is to model what healthy grieving looks like. Give yourself permission to feel and express your emotions in front of them and give them permission to do the same. When you show that it is okay to cry, to talk about your loved one, to feel all the feelings including the tough ones like abandonment, resentment or even anger, you are teaching them that grief is not something to hide. If you respond with silence, discomfort, or dismissal, they may learn to do the same.

Q Minnesota has now officially recognized Children's Grief Awareness Day every third Thursday in November. What does this mean to you, and how do you hope it impacts families across the state?

We are incredibly proud that Minnesota now officially recognizes Children's Grief Awareness Day every third Thursday in November. I submitted the proclamation back in 2021 after learning it was being honored in other states, and seeing it come to life here is deeply meaningful. It's more than a symbolic gesture; it is a powerful statement about how we choose to support grieving children and bring their experiences to light, rather than continuing to overlook them.

At Brighter Days, one of our most important roles is helping children become advocates for themselves. Of course, their ability to do this varies by age, but our goal is to equip them with the confidence to re-enter spaces like school after a parent dies and feel prepared to respond to the inevitable questions: Why isn't your dad here? How did your mom die? How many siblings do you have? These questions come fast and unfiltered, and when children don't know how to answer, they often retreat into isolation just to avoid discomfort. We want to change that. We

help children find language that feels safe and authentic to them so they can tell their story on their own terms. An example is when someone asks, "What was your mom's name?" We encourage them to say, "Her name IS Julie." She will always be Julie regardless of her death.

We also encourage them to talk about their person in ways that go beyond the circumstances of their death. Our culture tends to fixate on how someone died, but we encourage all griever to speak about how their person lived. It is incredibly empowering and emotionally healing to share about their life. While how they died may be an important part of their story, it is never their whole story.

Bringing Children's Grief Awareness Day to light helps us connect to the adults in their lives who can start bringing some of these tools into their schools, churches, and homes.

Q For readers who want to get involved or who know a child struggling with loss, where can they turn for resources and support?

If you are an adult supporting a grieving child or seeking support for yourself and/or your family, you are exactly why we exist. Please call us or visit our website to learn more about how to connect and get involved. <https://www.brighterdaysgriefcenter.org>

For those who wish to get involved, we would love to hear from you! As a statewide organization, we provide training and resources to schools, colleges, nonprofit and for-profit organizations, churches, and other grief-focused groups. Our volunteers are our best ambassadors, and we welcome your time, talent, and skills.

One of the most meaningful ways to engage with our mission is by attending our annual grief conference, *All Things Grief*, taking place on August 13, 2026. This powerful event brings together professionals, caregivers, and community members for a day of learning, connection, and healing.

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

Learn more

Brighter Days Family Grief Center
www.brighterdaysgriefcenter.org

Resource Directory

Eating Disorders

Melrose Center

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Substance Use Disorders

Minnesota Teen Challenge

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Workaholics Anonymous Meeting

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from page 1

emotionally,” Julia Hess, owner and founder of Bloomington-based Planting Seeds Recovery, told *The Phoenix Spirit*. “So, during the holidays, it might mean not having expectations that family members are going to show up as better versions of themselves during a time of high stress and overwhelm.”

With these thoughts in mind, this article explores managing and resetting holiday expectations, provides several practical tips for navigating the holidays, and looks at how those in recovery can, as the University of Minnesota’s Krentzman calls it, “find the positive;” that is, discover ways to have fun and find happier holidays without drinking and drugging.

MANAGING AND RESETTING EXPECTATIONS

Growing up in an affluent small town outside of Chicago, Stephen P. remembers an idyllic childhood, complete with fond Christmas memories. “The holidays were great. It meant a lot of family time, just a lot of fun.”

That experience, he said, set up high expectations for the holidays. “That set the barometer. That was the foundation for me. From then on, everything had to be that way.”

Those expectations were tough to live up to, though, as the years passed and Stephen fought battles with drug and alcohol addiction. *And the holidays?* Far from idyllic. “I was active in my addiction ... my wife was often disappointed in me and upset with me, including at Christmas.”

These days, Stephen, who now lives in Portland, Ore., has been clean and sober for more than 30 years. And he acknowledges that holidays can still be a challenge because of those “heightened expectations and experiences from the past,” he said. But he has been managing and resetting those expectations through acceptance and gratitude. “The program has helped me to go deeper into my heart and accept and be grateful. When you open your heart and realize the blessings and the lessons, it turns stuff 180 degrees.”

Indeed, acceptance and gratitude are at the heart of managing and resetting holiday expectations. In addition, several sources advise:

Set emotional boundaries. For those in recovery, take stock of what are the capacities of their friends and families, and what are their expectations, Hess of Planting Seeds advised: “Take time to think about the people you are going to have a connection with over the holidays



Left: Amy Krentzman, associate professor and director of research for the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota; Right: Julia Hess, owner and founder of Bloomington-based Planting Seeds Recovery.

and how they respond to holiday stress.” Additionally, “We can allow our loved ones to have stress and overwhelm without it being our fault, we don’t have to take it personally, we don’t need to take it on as our problem.”

Set expectations only for yourself. Related to establishing emotional boundaries, set expectations just for yourself, a *Psychology Today* article pointed out. “You have no control over the weather or the moods of your family members ... choose to focus on what you can control—yourself and your attitude.”

Set realistic expectations. Those long ago memories of an idyllic holiday can be just that—memories. Instead, be realistic about the holidays. “Your sober Christmas doesn’t have to be perfect,” stated the blog post, “A Sober Christmas,” from the Scottsdale Recovery Center. “Focus on small, meaningful moments instead of striving for a flawless holiday gathering.”

NAVIGATING THE HOLIDAYS: SOME TIPS

Krentzman of the University of Minnesota offered several tips to help recovery people navigate the holidays:

Follow some party parameters. Krentzman cited AA’s book *Living Sober*, which advises “arrive late and leave early,” as an effective strategy for maintaining sobriety when attending holiday parties where alcohol is present. Further, Krentzman advised bringing your own alcohol-free beverages and, depending on the situation, “maybe even skipping some gatherings if they seem like they are going to be too stressful.”



Explore your own interests. “The holidays can be a wonderful time to explore what you like to do as a sober person,” Krentzman said, such as visiting museums, parks, libraries, and bookstores. The holiday season can be a great time to “root yourself more strongly in your own recovery identity.”

Help others. “Research shows that helping others helps the helper,” Krentzman said. “Who do you know who might be lonely during this time, older adults, or others you know in recovery who might be alone or who are in need right now?” In other words, you can fulfill one of the promises stated in the Big Book: “We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away.”

Be grateful for others. The holidays are a great time to take stock of those you feel grateful for, and maybe even get in touch with them, Krentzman said. “Think of who you feel grateful for. Make a list, then contact them, send them a text or email or call them, and say ‘thinking of you and remembering all you did for me, the impact it has had on me.’ This is a great way to cultivate some joy and appreciation.”

FINDING THE POSITIVE

St. Cloud resident Wayne O. was dry, staying straight for his wife who was sober, but he had not yet entered into any sort of meaningful or formal recovery or 12-step program for himself. His wife’s dad was also in recovery, and, because it was nearly Christmas, they attended

a holiday party hosted by Wayne’s father-in-law with lots of fun stuff going on, groups playing cards, others sitting around listening to music and telling “bad jokes,” party-goers snacking on good food, and generally everyone having a good time, Wayne recalled.

“I thought it was weird, all of these people are not drinking but they’re having fun ... it was an eye-opening experience,” Wayne said.

Now sober for close to 40 years, Wayne added, “That was kind of the first step for me in realizing that I didn’t have to drink to have fun. You could get through the holidays and you didn’t have to be pickled.”

Wayne’s story stands as a testament to finding the positive in the holidays as a clean and sober person. Recovery people “care about increasing pleasure and happiness, and flourishing and having fun,” said Krentzman of the U of M. So, with that in mind, seek out ways to have fun. Maybe your AA group or recovery community will have its own holiday party, or try new meetings you haven’t been to before. Or, if you’re traveling, try an out-of-town meeting.

You can create new holiday traditions, as the blog post “A Sober Christmas” advises. “Make this holiday season about activities that reflect your new alcohol-free lifestyle.”

Finally, as the *Psychology Today* article points out, “Choose to avoid conflict, approach your holidays the right way, and be kind to yourself and others (even when you don’t want to be). Kindness is so simple, yet so effective.”

Angelo Gentile is a Minneapolis freelance journalist and former newspaper and magazine editor who has also worked in public relations and corporate communications.

Learn more

"A Sober Christmas"

scottsdaleprovidence.com/a-sober-christmas

Psychology Today article

psychologytoday.com/us/blog/between-you-and-me/201612/why-expectations-can-ruin-the-holidays



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SIDEBAR

Celebrating the Holidays When Someone is Newly Sober or Not Sober

During the holidays, some families will be interacting with someone who may be in early recovery or treatment, or someone who is using drugs or drinking heavily.

Amy Krentzman, associate professor and director of research for the School of Social Work at the University of Minnesota, advises that, if a family member is in early recovery or treatment, talk with them privately before the holidays and discuss what you can do to support their recovery.

Hess advises creating a holiday celebration that does not have alcohol and drugs available. "This will take the pressure or temptation away for the person in recovery and everyone attending will be more authentic and emotionally present. It is ok to change traditions. It is not just about the recovering person. Non-alcoholic options allow everyone to make a change to take better care of their bodies, minds, and relationships."

For those coping with individuals still using, Krentzman points to Al-Anon, the 12-step program for friends and family members which offers advice for the holidays on setting boundaries and expectations and on having alternate holiday plans.

In addition, Julia Hess, owner and founder of Planting Seeds Recovery, advises, "If your loved one is still struggling with substance overuse, think about how you can let them know you are thinking of them while also keeping safe boundaries. Showing love does not increase substance abuse. It will allow them to see that they have people who will support them in choosing recovery."

FROM THE STATE OF MINNESOTA

Commentary From Minnesota's First Addiction and Recovery Director

by Jeremy Drucker

This past year has been eventful in the addiction and recovery space. Program integrity concerns, a new legislature, and the transition in the federal government brought a significant amount of change and disruption. At the federal level the change in priorities, staff and funding cuts in federal agencies, and inconsistent guidance to states created additional challenges for serving Minnesotans experiencing substance use disorder. Despite all this, Minnesota continued to make progress on key initiatives and areas of focus.

OVERDOSE DEATHS

The Governor's One Minnesota Strategic Plan for the state calls on the Subcabinet on Opioids, Substance Use, and Addiction to focus on reducing opioid overdose deaths. In October, the Governor announced that overdose deaths from 2023 to 2024 declined by 26%, and opioid overdose deaths specifically declined by 32%. These reductions occurred in nearly every geographical community in the state and across every demographic. The state also saw a significant decrease in non-fatal overdoses as well.

OVERDOSE PREVENTION

Over the past two years, the Office of Addiction and Recovery (OAR) worked with staff at the Departments of Human Services and Health (DHS and MDH) and community partners on developing a naloxone saturation strategy to help ensure that every community in Minnesota receives the naloxone they need in the quantity and format needed. In February, the state published the first Naloxone Saturation Strategy that sets forth guiding principles, key pillars, and specific approaches to achieve this vision, including ensuring the availability of both nasal and intramuscular naloxone, and developing quantitative and qualitative measures to track saturation progress within communities. This comprehensive approach ensures that naloxone saturation not only saves lives but also provides opportunities to positively change the direction of lives impacted by opioid overdoses.

RATE INCREASES FOR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER RESIDENTIAL PROVIDERS AND OTHER LEGISLATIVE CHANGES

Despite a challenging state budget outlook that is projecting a future deficit, OAR worked with state lawmakers and Governor Walz to not only protect previous behavioral health investments but also achieve an important increase in rates for residential substance use disorder (SUD) treatment.

This rate increase will help ensure that SUD providers across the state will be able to keep their doors open and provide the necessary services for Minnesotans seeking recovery. This was an



Drucker / Photo courtesy of MMB

From 2023 to 2024, overdose deaths declined by 26%, and opioid overdose deaths specifically declined by 32%.

important win in a tough budget year that demonstrates Minnesota's bipartisan recognition of and commitment to making sure that our substance use disorder services remain strong. Other important SUD related changes included recovery residence reform and additional program integrity measures to ensure taxpayer dollars in this area are well spent.

Also, this past legislative session the Subcabinet on Opioids, Substance Use, and Addiction was expanded to include: the Department of Commerce; the Department of Children, Youth, and Families; Direct Care and Treatment; and the Office of Cannabis Management. The Subcabinet was also given responsibility for developing an interagency state substance use plan. Finally, one other important piece of legislation championed by OAR was passed: The Overdose Detection Mapping Application Program (ODMAP), a public health tool that tracks overdoses in real time, more easily usable by law enforcement and public health and increasing the quality of the data.

IMPROVING SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER SERVICES FOR JUSTICE-INVOLVED MINNESOTANS

Building on the work begun in 2024 in transforming how behavioral health services are provided inside prisons and jails through passage of legislation directing Minnesota to apply for federal approval to use Medicaid dollars for this population, OAR continued driving progress in this area by helping guide submission of the federal 1115 Reentry Waiver application as well as a report with recommendations from the Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) in jails workgroup. The MOUD in Jails Workgroup, convened by OAR and co-chaired by the Minnesota Medical Association and Minnesota Sheriff's Association, created practical recommendations for improving access to these life-saving medications in jails.

STATE OF MINNESOTA CERTIFIED AS RECOVERY FRIENDLY WORKPLACE

In September, the State of Minnesota was the first state government to be nationally certified as a recovery friendly workplace (RFW). This certification followed an executive order issued by Governor Walz in October of 2024 directing the state to become recovery friendly. Recovery friendly workplaces support their communities by recognizing recovery from substance use disorder as a strength and by being willing to work intentionally with people in recovery. RFWs encourage a healthy and safe environment where employers, employees, and communities can collaborate to create positive change and eliminate barriers for those impacted by addiction.

OAR, along with MDH and the Minnesota Safety Council are currently convening a steering committee to develop a Minnesota focused statewide Recovery Friendly Workplace.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026

Going forward, the state's addiction and recovery work will continue to navigate changing federal demographics, as challenges will emerge around implementation of the federal One Big Beautiful Bill that is slated to cost Minnesota more than a billion dollars over the next several years and result in over 140,000 Minnesotans losing coverage. OAR will continue to work with state agencies on strategies to ensure that Minnesotans experiencing substance use disorder are able to access the services and supports they need, no matter where they are on their recovery journey.

Jeremy Drucker is the state's first Addiction and Recovery Director and is a person in long-term recovery. In this role he chairs a subcabinet of state agencies focused on improving outcomes for Minnesotans experiencing substance use disorder, their families, and their communities.

Learn more

Office of Addiction and Recovery
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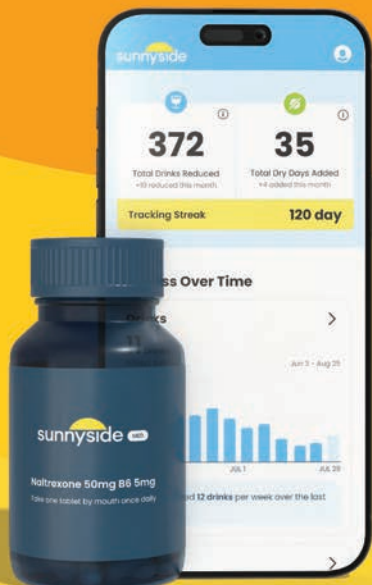


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SPOTLIGHT ON RECOVERY

Healing in the Woods: How One Woman Turned Sobriety into Statewide Hope

by Mary E. Berg



Freyholtz-London / Photo provided by Freyholtz-London

Jode Freyholtz-London, founder of Wellness in the Woods, a Recovery Community Organization (RCO), shares her recovery journey and career path. Her story begins in a small town with good intentions and unspoken pain.

"I'm from rural Todd County, in central Minnesota," Jode recalls. "Alcohol wasn't really part of my family life—maybe a beer when it was cold—but no one struggled with it."

Jode married young, at just 18. "Getting married just seemed like the right thing to do," she says. "But after twenty-five years, the marriage wasn't working. I found myself in a place where I wasn't allowed to get help. I used alcohol as my hiding place. It was easier not to think."

Her professional life, once devoted to supported employment programs for people with disabilities, began to crumble around the same time. "I'd worked for several organizations that failed because of fraud," Jode says. "After I blew the whistle at one, I lost my job. With both my marriage and career ending, I fell into a severe depression."

In 2007, newly divorced, Jode moved north to Nimrod, Minnesota: "Thirty miles from anywhere and thirty more from any place else." Life in the woods offered solace: horses, wildlife, and solitude. She and her neighbor, Jess, would sit around the campfire chatting. One night Jess invited her to the local bar. While hanging out at the J and J bar, Jode also found something else—a false sense of belonging.

"There was no judgment there," she recalls. "Coming from a judgmental relationship that felt good. But of course, alcohol was part of that."

Between a karaoke party that moved from the bar to her place and a huge drinking party on her 50th birthday, she realized alcohol was an issue. "Thankfully, no one at those parties got hurt, drowned in the pond, or arrested," she says. "But I was spending too much money and losing too much of myself."

One of her dear friends, Tom, also struggled with an unhappy marriage and

long-time alcohol use. His wife told him that he had to leave so she could think. He called Jode that day and asked, "What should I do?" She told him, "Get an apartment — and maybe we should both just knock off drinking."

On April 27, 2009, they made a commitment to each other and to God to stop drinking. "That was the end of it," Jode says simply. Fourteen months later, they married. The two built a life grounded in recovery and purpose. "We both needed a lot of healing," she says. "He was my best support." When Tom later developed dementia — what he called "a consequence of his youthful indiscretions" — she cared for him at home until his passing. "Losing him has been one of the hardest things I've faced," she admits. "He passed away about 14 months ago, but I've kept my promise — to him and to God — to stay sober."

She was six years sober when the consumer-run statewide organization she worked for serving central Minnesota started a new requirement: spend three days per week in St. Paul, no expenses paid. "I came home and told Tom, 'I think we should start our own nonprofit — one that does things with integrity and doesn't lose the mission.' He said, 'Let's do it.'"

That seed grew into Wellness in the Woods (WITW), a peer-run organization that began as a mental health support network and has since evolved into one of Minnesota's leading peer-driven recovery initiatives. Tom supported her, getting safe food training to cook conference meals, training as a facilitator, and handling things at home when Jode traveled. "He believed in the organization completely," she says.

From the beginning, Jode and her team set clear boundaries. "We decided we would never accept pharmaceutical money," she says. "Our board chair, Dr. Steven Pratt, wears purple every day in memory of Prince—to remind himself and other doctors of the dangers of over-prescribing. That's the kind of integrity we stand for."

Wellness in the Woods rejects the "silo" approach that separates mental health and substance use. "Many programs only serve one or the other," Jode says. "We serve the whole person. And we don't bill for services—because billing requires someone to be in crisis or have a diagnosis. We want to reach people before they get there."

The organization's warm line, a free overnight phone line operating from 5 p.m. to 9 a.m., has saved countless lives. But in March 2024, federal funding was cut. "We've been surviving on temporary funds donated by Minnesota's Adult Mental Health Initiatives," Jode says. "We're waiting on a new state grant, but we're not giving up." Funding cuts reduced the management team from seven people to four, but Jode is proud of their resilience. "My team is solid and trustworthy. Every board member identifies as a peer. When we say 100% peer-run, we mean it."

In addition to the warm line, WITW offers all-day virtual peer support accessible to any adult in Minnesota, at no cost, with no appointment. Sessions offered three nights per week help individuals dealing with substance use, incarceration, or long-term recovery. "People on parole can count these online sessions toward their meeting requirements," Jode notes.

The organization also works inside eight county jails, offering peer support and helping incarcerated individuals develop Wellness Recovery Action Plans (WRAPs). About 25% of the WITW staff have been incarcerated. Every staff member completes their own WRAP plan during two days of paid training.

*We serve the whole person.
And we don't bill for services—because billing requires someone to be in crisis or have a diagnosis. We want to reach people before they get there.*

Jode says, "You have to care for yourself before you can guide someone else."

The team undergoes regular training—from cultural awareness to trauma-informed care—to reflect Minnesota's diversity. A new pilot program called Next Step Support connects people leaving treatment or incarceration with a peer who shares their experience. "They meet weekly for up to a year," Jode explains. "That continuity can make all the difference."

Data matters, too. "Our communications director loves charts and graphs,"

HEALING IN THE WOODS to pg 11



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Freyholtz-London / Photo provided by Freyholtz-London

Jode laughs. “We collect data on every program—warm line calls, online sessions, testimonials.”

Testimonials tell the real story. “We’ve had people call saying they were suicidal but reached out to us instead. Just knowing someone cared kept them safe.” The team tracks where calls come from to guide outreach efforts. “During the George Floyd protests, many callers needed support around racial trauma. Now, we’re hearing more anxiety about losing benefits—SNAP, housing, student loans. People are scared. We’re here to listen when they have no one else.”

This fall, Jode launched a Tuesday night grief group after getting trained as a grief counselor and educator. “It’s been deeply needed,” she says. The organization plans to launch an online radio-style podcast dedicated solely to recovery stories. “No politics—just hope,” Jode emphasizes. Under a contract with the Department of Corrections, she and her team visit prisons four times a year, including Oak Park Heights maximum security. “We never ask why anyone’s there,” she says. “We just meet them with respect. No matter what someone’s done, they still deserve support.”

She sees herself as the “big idea” person—out attending conferences, local advisory councils, and meeting with

state legislators. As vice chair of the State Mental Health Advisory Council and a member on the Minnesota Certification Board, Jode stays informed on peer recovery policies statewide. WITW collaborates with and participates in numerous statewide events. “In 2024, we had 54,000 interactions with people—at the Minnesota State Fair, county fairs, and recovery walks,” she says. “We’re out there because our biggest challenge is marketing; grants rarely fund it. But getting the word out saves lives.”

Through it all, Jode Freyholtz-London’s mission has remained deeply personal. “Everything we do comes back to integrity and hope,” she says. “I’ve been through loss, addiction, and grief—but I’ve also seen what recovery looks like when people believe in each other. That’s what Wellness in the Woods is all about: peers helping peers and proving that healing is possible for everyone.”

Mary E. Berg is a retired associate professor of clinical education, a resume writer, published author, and poet. Her first poetry collection, *A Mystic in the Mystery: Poems of Spirit, Seasons, and Self* was published in 2024. Her website is: marybergresumewriter.com.

You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

THE 12 STEP CORNER

Step 3

by Mark Scannell

“We made a decision to turn our wills and our lives over to the care of our Higher Powers, as we understood our Higher Powers.”



Step 3 introduces us to an important action in recovery – “made a decision.” I see making decisions and choices as a very important part of our recovery. Our addictive actions can often be just reacting to triggers – like alcohol, drugs, porn – without really thinking about what we are doing. This Step stresses the importance of making choices.

Also, as I have changed some of the language of the Steps in my book on the 12 Steps, I have decided to be consistent in using Higher Powers. This could be one’s God or whoever or whatever help us to remain on our recovery path.


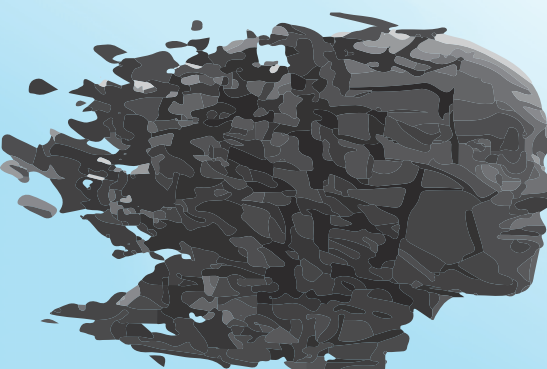
So, how important to you is making choices in your recovery process?

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

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Driggs from page 1

I kept life simple, took one day at a time and thanked God for the abundance of love I received. I put more emphasis on gratitude than resentments.

WHAT DID I LEARN FROM ALL OF THIS?

With deep sadness, and some denial at first, I accepted God's verdict on my life and thanked Him for what life he had already given me. After all, my suffering was just a part of life and was no one's fault. You may wonder, as do I now, how I have done this mental shift so easily. Well, the truth of the matter is that it was, and is, not so easy (sob! Sob!) at all (I really miss my clients with my whole heart!). But I learned from this ordeal and would like to share with you some of what I learned. Perhaps, you may learn from my ordeal.

Losing essential things in our life challenges us to find ways to deal with losses and undergo grief arising from these losses. So, I entered transitional care through Episcopal Homes to have my head injury assessed and treated with the latest scientific protocol. It was difficult to realize that my whole spinal column was damaged and that I would likely have trouble walking, maintaining my balance and not falling again. I was at a low point when I realized this. Then I told myself, "This is exactly where I wanted to be," to give me the motivation to lick this illness. I learned about neuroplasticity. I've done physical therapy 3 times a week with a monster coach who told me that I can learn to change my body through repetitive reparative exercises. This is exactly what I've done with my own clients, so I knew precisely what she meant—she was preaching to the choir. And it worked! Over the course of a year, I've gone from a wheelchair to a walker to a normal walker, had some surgery on my spine to limit DISH episodes and joined La-La jazz dancing group. I am not perfect in my recovery but have amazed many people with my recovery and turned a few heads—just like many of my own psychotherapy clients in my past practice. What works for the goslings also works for the goose! This learning from my clients is exactly what I've done in the last year. It is needless to say how grateful I am to them for their teaching me.

SPECIFICS OF WHAT I LEARNED ABOUT RECOVERY

The most important things I learned at the start were: to accept that I was wounded and needed help, to forgive myself for having a fall (after all, anybody can fall as they age), to swallow my

pride and refuse to feel sorry for myself and know that I absolutely needed caring from others in my repair, to get expert help from professionals who were willing to have a relationship with me in my recovery and see me as the strong person whom I am, and to be grateful to God for this opportunity to grow as a person. This mental attitude and support from my wife and loved ones was a terrific start! I felt the love from loved ones in my body and looked forward to getting better and surprising people. Boy, did I surprise everybody, but mostly myself! All of these attitudes resulted in real physical repair in my body once I made the effort. I even found other areas of needed repair that I discovered along the way, including getting a sleep CPAP machine to help my sleep apnea, losing 20 pounds of needless weight and having a more personal relationship with my Creator. Although I wouldn't recommend falling as a way to grow, I certainly made the most out of this opportunity.

DEEPER ASPECTS OF SELF-REPAIR THAT MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

When I had an accident like this and went through a life change, I knew I would be in serious grief. So, I let myself grieve for as long as I needed. I kept life simple, took one day at a time and thanked God for the abundance of love I received. I put more emphasis on gratitude than resentments. Most of all I celebrated each small victory of my recovery. And I talked to my Higher Power about my uncertainty and my need for a higher purpose in my life. I signed up inside to be a better person no matter what. I thanked every person who helped me each day and witnessed their love. People grew to like working with me as they still do now. I got to know each of my helpers in a personal way and tried remembering what they said to me, just as I did with my clients. I listened to their life struggles and blessed them. This practice only increased my gratitude. Clearly my main source of gratitude was for my wife as we became closer in the ordeal and hard work of my treatment. I remained stunned by how much love she poured into me and vice versa. It was like a tidal wave! So, God gave me a miracle to offset my suffering.

I want to say a few words about trying to repair yourself in a medical setting. First, I would urge you to realize that you are in charge of your own body, not the doctors, nurses, or other well-intentioned "helpers." You get the lion's share of triumph if you succeed and the disappointment if you falter. Be in charge of your own body and recovery. You are the real expert on yourself. Doctors may be wizards when it comes to technology but you and your Creator are the real wizards of your healing. So, assert your needs, ask for help with intimate details of your life and be willing to say "No" to anyone who wants to help you for your own good. Too often what is for your own good does not jive with what is good for you. Listen to, but don't lose yourself, to your helpers. You are the real expert on yourself. Boundaries get blurred in critical care. Medical settings, and some friends, often get caught up in heroic rescuing and legal snafus rather than practicing authentic medicine. In my case, I turned down help from a world-famous neurologist because she lacked empathy and said no to the expertise of the doctor who ordered excessive CAT scans on my head. I refused certain medications that I considered unsafe after an internet search. I was a real pain-in-the-back when I needed to be with certain helpers. Mostly, I was a compliant patient when I felt that my questions were answered. Most of the time helpers with good bedside skills ought to be trusted especially when they tell you what you don't want to hear and can make you laugh about your dilemma.

MY WHOLE-HEARTED GOOD-BYE TO MY CLIENTS

I feel that I need to apologize to you, my beloved readers, for just leaving you in the dark without any explanation for several months as to where I went. Just lying in a confused state, in the operating room on my back with you in my heart caused me great pain. Now that I am realizing what day of the year this is, I have tried to give you some explanation, which is your due. I can't guarantee that I won't pull one of these miracle stunts again but I can guarantee that I carried you and your words with me each moment in my heart and included your recovery into mine. For that I am eternally grateful beyond what words could say. Please remember the love we shared and continue to share to this day. It is a forever gift.

See you next time here on these pages! As best as I can tell. Love, John.

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

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FROM THE STATE OF MINNESOTA

Building a Stronger Foundation for Recovery Housing in Minnesota

by *Teresa Steinmetz*

Stable housing is one of the most important building blocks for recovery from substance use disorder. That's especially true for people who are exiting treatment and entering one of the most vulnerable times in their recovery journey.

Without stable housing, people are at much greater risk of relapse, hospitalization, or incarceration. That's why Minnesota is reshaping how it supports, funds and oversees recovery residences (formerly known as sober homes).

Minnesota's new recovery residence model is more than a change in terminology; it's a system-wide shift toward better care, stronger protections for clients, and clearer funding paths for providers and residents alike. But with any major reform, we recognize there are growing pains.

Some providers are facing uncertainty about their future, particularly those who rely on the Free Standing Room and Board program, which is being phased out. DHS is here to help guide the transition and provide support along the way.

For many years, sober homes operated with little oversight and limited connection to public funding streams. Many well-intentioned providers have done incredible work, often with few resources. However, without consistent standards or a sustainable funding model, both clients and providers were left in a vulnerable position.

The Free Standing Room and Board program was originally designed to fill a gap, particularly in rural areas where residential treatment is scarce or unavailable. But it was never meant to serve as a permanent funding mechanism for recovery housing. Since the program is directly tied to the individual's treatment needs, it does not provide the kind of long-term stability that people in recovery need.

In 2025, the Minnesota Legislature acted to change this. At DHS's recommendation, lawmakers voted to end the Free Standing Room and Board program by June 30, 2027, and, instead, create a

pathway for certain certified recovery residences to become eligible for the Housing Support Program (HSP) — a more stable and equitable source of funding.

The Housing Support Program (HSP) is a state-funded program that pays for room and board costs for adults with low incomes who have a disabling condition or are 65 or older. Approved Housing Support providers receive payments on behalf of eligible recipients, and funds are used to pay for rent, utilities, food, household supplies, and other housing-related expenses.

Beginning January 1, 2027, certified recovery residences will be able to enter into HSP agreements directly with DHS. This is a significant change from the current system, where HSP contracts are typically managed by counties or Tribal governments.

To qualify, residences must meet certain certification standards and comply with existing HSP setting requirements. Once certified and approved, providers will receive a monthly room and board payment (determined annually) for each eligible resident. These funds will bring much-needed financial stability to recovery residences across the state.

Importantly, this model increases independence and choice for residents. If a person decides to stop treatment or change treatment providers, they do not have to move or lose their HSP benefit.

We know that this transition has created uncertainty for some. We hear and understand the frustration. That's why DHS is working to educate providers, counties, and Tribal partners about other options and funding sources that may help bridge the gap until 2027. Some examples include:

- Opioid Settlement Funds: Cities and counties have access to funds to combat the opioid crisis, and supportive housing is an approved use. Providers can connect with local officials to explore opportunities.
- Small Cities Development Program: This federal grant program helps

smaller cities, townships, and counties rehabilitate housing for people with low to moderate incomes.

- Recovery Housing Program: Larger cities and metro areas can tap into Community Development Block Grant funds to support decent, stable housing for low-income individuals in recovery.

DHS has also been working with providers who did get approved for Free Standing Room and Board to educate about compliance requirements, and to share updates about upcoming changes to the program. DHS has published a website to help these providers which can be found here: mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/program-overviews/fsrb/.

We believe that this new model will better support people in recovery by ensuring more stability, flexibility, and oversight. It also helps protect the integrity of our public programs. Recent legislation signed by Governor Walz includes new anti-fraud measures and billing reforms to ensure taxpayer dollars are used responsibly and effectively. We all benefit when resources are directed to the people and programs that need them most.

At DHS, we remain committed to walking alongside our recovery housing providers, community leaders, and Tribal partners through this transition. By working together, we can build a stronger, safer, and more equitable recovery housing system — one that supports not just sobriety, but long-term healing and stability.

Teresa Steinmetz is assistant commissioner of the Behavioral Health Administration at the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

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ESSAY

Beginner's Mind

by Mary Lou Logsdon

Illustration by Paris Bilal



"In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few."

SHUNRYU SUZUKI

The holidays of late fall and early winter are laden with tradition, memories, and expectations. As I enter this often fraught season, I consider the Buddhist teaching of beginner's mind, the concept of meeting each moment with curiosity and wonder.

The idea of *beginner's mind* was introduced to western culture in 1970 by Zen Master Shunryu Suzuki in his book *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*. He tells us, "In the beginner's mind there is no thought, 'I have attained something.' All self-centered thoughts limit our vast mind. When we have no thought of achievement, no thought of self, we are true beginners. Then we can really learn something. The beginner's mind is the mind of compassion. When our mind is compassionate, it is boundless."

A *beginner's mind* comes with an attitude of humility. I don't know everything I think I know. I still have much to learn. Children are good role models for *beginner's mind*. Watch a child try a new skill. They are engaged, present, persistent. A one-year-old learning to walk takes a few steps, falls down, gets up, tries again. Tumbles. Up again. Over and over, fully engaged, all smiles when she lands into mom's outstretched arms. That

can be us, too. We can recapture some of that joy when we persist in a new skill, becoming engaged, present, persistent. We give ourselves permission to not do it perfectly.

Another thing children do is ask questions, wonder why, experiment. They try putting things together that sometimes work and often don't. They don't feel like a failure if the tower of blocks falls; they laugh and try again.

A *beginner's mind* gives us permission to fail. *Can I take on the mind of a scientist?* A scientist's failures are as important as their successes—this didn't work, try another way.

One obstacle to a *beginner's mind* is that we know too much. It's so easy to do things we know well—drive the same way to work, cook familiar foods, talk about the same grievances, hang out with the same people. What if we set our expertise aside and do something we don't know how to do, something we've never done, something that is hard for us? Our lives can be so routine that we have little space for the delight of being a newbie. Having a *beginner's mind* is making a fresh start to everything we do. I like to think of it as Montessori for adults.

We have a friend willing to test our experimental cooking as we explore new recipes. Our pilot project is much more fun when shared—we all know it needn't be perfect—sometimes it's an outright failure. The point is to grow and explore, not get it right.

Tony Zampella, founder of Bhavana Learning Group, describes three aspects of cultivating a *beginner's mind*. **First, tolerate discomfort.** Learn to be comfortable with uncertainty. Our comfort zone is way overrated. How can we learn when we are only willing to be comfortable? We can be so comfortable in our familiar ruts, we would rather spruce up the rut than get ourselves out of it.

Secondly, embrace not knowing. Be gentle with yourself. I volunteer with seniors as they build their technology skills. People walk in not knowing how to text or use a new phone or find a podcast. We walk them through the steps, introduce them to unfamiliar apps, welcome their questions. I appreciate their willingness to say, "I don't know how to do this." Step by step they gain the skills to let technology work for them.

Finally, slow down enough to become more present. It is much harder to speed through something that is new to us. Travel is a way to slow down. I am not sure where I am going or how long it will take. Last winter I visited the World War II Museum in New Orleans. I could have spent days there! It's a campus of seven buildings that immerses you in that historical experience. I set aside the little I already knew and walked into a brand new world. I was in the moment, present to the recorded voices, the personal survivor stories, the expansive model of the D-day invasion. I meandered through time and space, no rush, no agenda.

Here is a suggestion for accessing your *beginner's mind*. List 10 things you would like to learn or do. Not things you need to do or are good for you. Things you really want to learn or experience, places you want to go, people you want to meet. Brainstorm. Don't edit or judge. Even if it feels crazy or unrealistic, write it down. Then go through the list and pick one or two you want to try. Maybe it is learning a new language, taking a cooking class, trying pickleball. Perhaps you want to travel to a place you've been curious about or visit a friend across the country or explore a National Park. What would it take to make it happen? What is the first step?

As I write this, I think of many things I would like to try—watercolor painting,

Children are good role models for beginner's mind. Watch a child try a new skill. They are engaged, present, persistent.

Tai Chi, going to a midweek matinee movie, trying an electric bike, taking the train to Chicago. A *beginner's mind* might give us the freedom to try a do-it-yourself project.

What are the benefits of a *beginner's mind*? We learn and grow. It is hard to learn new things if we know everything. We improve our problem solving skills. We enhance our creativity, uncovering creative tendencies we may have packed away in favor of safety or efficiency. We increase our openness and curiosity.

How will I enter this holiday season with a *beginner's mind*? I will practice curiosity. Often the people we visit with at the holidays are people we care about but don't often see. What might we learn about them that we don't already know (or think we know)? Rather than assume I know who people are and their opinions and stances, based on how I have known them, I can listen for what might be new, how they've changed, or how their interests have evolved. This takes some careful listening and often encouragement. Tell me more about that.

I can get tickets to a performance by a local theater or choir and invite an acquaintance I would like to know better. I can visit an indoor farmer's market, try out a new ethnic restaurant, volunteer at a local food shelf. I can practice compassion.

I invite you to join me in rediscovering our *beginner's mind*. The one we came with. Let me know what you learn.

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

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SUPPORT GROUPS

MONDAYS

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

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

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

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

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

Friends and Families of Suicide: a place of support and comfort where those that have lost a loved one to suicide will be comfortable talking about their own loss as well as hearing about the losses of others. Meets the 3rd Monday of every month 7-9pm, Twin Cities Friends Meeting, 1725 Grand Ave., St Paul, 55105. For info email ffosmn@yahoo.com or call Tracy at 651-587-8006.

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

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

TUESDAYS

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

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

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

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

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

Overeaters Anonymous Roseville: Meetings are held from 10–11am (and Saturday’s from 8-9) at St. Christopher’s Episcopal Church, 2300 N. Hamline

Ave., Roseville, Room 218 Call Janie 651-639-4246 for more info.

A.C.A., 5:30-7 pm, Dakota Alano House, 3920 Rahn Rd, Eagan (Hwy 13 & Cedarvale Shop Ctr). 651-452-2921.www.dasinc.org/

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

Get a Fresh Start! 12-Step AA group, open meeting Tues., 7pm, at Kingswill Church, 1264 109th Ave NE, Blaine. Denny, 763-757-6512.

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

WEDNESDAYS

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

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

Overeaters Anonymous: St. Paul Midway: Wednesdays 7–8 PM, Hamline United Methodist Church. Two blocks east of Snelling & Minnehaha. Park in south parking lot, use south entrance to education building. Press buzzer. For more info contact Susan at 651-295-7854.

Adult Children of Alcoholics: Wednesdays @ 7 -8:30pm. St. Mary’s Episcopal Church, 1895 Laurel Ave, St. Paul. Meets downstairs, sign in the lobby. For more information call Mary at 612-747-0709 or Tom 651-894-3523.

Transitions: 7:30 to 9:30pm Support to men and women who are transitioning from incarceration to living in the community. Trained facilitators and peers provide emotional support in a safe, openly honest environment to discuss discouragements, frustrations, temptations. One of the trained facilitators is a woman. The Men’s Center, 3249 Hennepin Ave. S. Minneapolis, 612-822-5892. TCM.org

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

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

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

THURSDAYS

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

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

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

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

Red Book ACA/ACOA: Recovery Church, 253 State, St. Paul, 7-8:30pm. For more info call Jacob at 612-819-9370 or Bruce at 651.407.6336.

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

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

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

Adults with ADHD Support Groups: (first time free) Every Thursday morning 10am-noon and every Thursday evening (except last Thurs of the month) 7pm 8:30pm. LDA Minnesota, 6100 Golden Valley Road, Golden Valley, MN 55422. Tel. 952-582-6000 or www.ldaminnesota.org.

FRIDAYS

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

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

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.

SATURDAYS

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

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

Northeast Minneapolis CoDependents Anonymous (CoDA) Group: Meeting via Zoom only. 10:30 to 11:30 am. Contact Ralph W. at 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 Courage to Change Meeting: Saturday mornings 8-9am at St Christopher’s Episcopal Church, 2300 Hamline Ave N. Roseville. Contact Donna with questions at 651-633-3144.

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

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

Overeaters Anonymous: 8-9 am, Falcon Heights Community Church, 1795 Holton Street, Falcon Heights. Lisa 651-428-3484.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder Support Group: 1st and 3rd Sat. of the month, 11am -1pm at Faith Mennonite Church, 2720 E. 22nd St, Minneapolis. Website: tinyurl.com/tcocdsg. Call before coming for direction. Burt at 612-547-6388.

Adult Children of Alcoholics & Dysfunctional Families: Saturday at 10 a.m., St. Philip’s Lutheran Church, 6180 Highway 65 NE, Fridley MN 55432-5106 (Enter at Door 3). 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.

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

SUNDAYS

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

Double Winners Anonymous: Closed meeting of alcoholic women who combine recovery with Alanon. 5:30pm. Wesley Rm, Lake Harriet United Methodist Church, 4901 Chowen Ave. S., Mpls. Take doors from pkg lot, turn left down the hall. LeeAnn J at 763-234-1054 or Margaret K at 612-823-8279.

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

Calix Society: A group of Catholic Recovering Alcoholics and their family/significant others who desire to strengthen their spiritual growth, meets the 3rd Sun. of the month at Cathedral of St. Paul. Mass at 8am., breakfast/speaker meeting at 9am. Call Jim B. at 651-779-6828.

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

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

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

ABOUT THE LISTINGS

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the support groups on this page. However, we recommend that you contact the group before attending. If you have a listing and need to make a change OR you would like your group included (and on our website), please reach out to us at phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com. In-kind donations are appreciated to keep these listings published and updated at www.thephoenixspirit.com/support.



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