

Recovery,  
Renewal and  
Growth

# The Phoenix Spirit

September  
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2023

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Imagine you are 14 years old. Your parents blast you with venomous comments when they are in a drug stupor, or they disappear for days. Or maybe they push you to go to school when you are so depressed and scared that you wish you could die. You only go because the fentanyl is there waiting for you. It's the one thing you know you can count on to get out of this hole.

Imagine you are the parent of a 16-year-old and everything you try to do to keep that child healthy and safe seems to backfire on you. You're tired of the lies, the ER visits after the cuttings, the calls from the school. For a moment you may even feel complete disgust for this child of yours and then sink into shame over that.

Who is going to care enough to turn these situations around?

Only a handful of local treatment programs roll out the red carpet for such

teens. One is tucked inside Fairview's massive health system. Another, Lakeside Academy operated by Minnesota Adult & Teen Challenge, was just cited by *Newsweek* as one of the top treatment programs in the country.

**IT TAKES LOVE**

Staff at Fairview's adolescent treatment program stand ready with an enthusiastic welcome for young people dealing with both addiction and mental health difficulties. Program Manager Nicole Herlofsky is quick to say how much she loves kids like this.

"They're fun and they're funny and they're irreverent," she says, with a light-hearted laugh. "It's the best job."

She and her staff treat adolescents with both addiction and mental disorders in both inpatient and outpatient programs.

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JOHN H. DRIGGS, LICSW

## When We Pretend to Have an Identity

*"Oh yes, I'm the great pretender, Pretending that I'm doing well, My need is such I pretend too much, I'm lonely but no one can tell..."*

From Buck Ram's "The Great Pretender"

These days too many of us lack an identity. We may say we are our own persons and claim to be independent. Yet we are the first to run to the mall because everybody else is doing that. We may claim to be happy with our lives. Yet we might be consumed with envy when someone else has what we don't have. We may say that our success is self-made. Yet we crumble like a cookie when someone even slightly criticizes us. Some of us deceive ourselves into thinking we are our own persons when in reality nothing could be further from the truth.

Pretending to have an identity hurts our relationships as we may suppress our disagreements with others for fear of being disliked, have insincere relationships, and live with diminished life satisfaction. However, the one more hurt by self-deception is ourselves. When we can't be who we are, we inevitably see ourselves as ugly and unlovable.

You may ask, "What's the harm in pretending? Doesn't everyone do that?" Actually pretending isn't harmful in itself. We all do it. Actors, salesmen, and ordinary people put on a certain face to be effective in their craft or to protect their deserved privacy. The real harm comes from pretending when we do it for the wrong reasons or don't realize that we are pretending at all. Sheldon Kopp, a wise psychotherapist, once said, "It's not the pretending, it's the pretending that we are not pretending that hurts us." When we withhold information that others have a right to know, put on a false face to hide our inadequacies or overrate just how strong-minded we really are is when pretending hurts us. Living the false life robs us of kinship with others and makes us persistently lonely.

Modern life cultivates pretending. So many of us are desperate to fit in, we adopt an "attitude" and pretend to not care what other people think of us. In our culture people with an attitude are idolized. Others want to be around idols, as witnessed by the millions who worship at the altar of *American Idol*. Unfortunately, arrogance, being "all that and acting like the star are often confused with confidence. Just the opposite is true

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Q & A

## Jeremy Drucker

In June 2022, Governor Walz signed legislation establishing the role of Addiction and Recovery Director. He appointed Jeremy Drucker, a person in long-term recovery and former health care official with Governor Mark Dayton's office to take on the position. Drucker started his duties with the state this year and we had a chance to ask him some questions about his new office and goals he plans to achieve within its capacity. See page 13 for our interview with Drucker.





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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

# The Hidden Artist

by Louise Elowen



*"I found I could say things with color and shapes that I couldn't say any other way – I had no words for."*

GEORGIA O'KEEFE

Did you know that an artist resides in you? It's in there somewhere, you just might not have met it yet. In a world where business takes center stage, that creative soul within is more often than not discouraged, smothered, or even extinguished. Yet, creativity is essential to expressing our emotions, working through problems, and, well, just for the sheer joy of it. The artist grants us freedom. And not everything has to have a price tag.

Art is often used as a recovery tool: Painting, drawing, writing, music, dance, even scent (think of the creativity which goes into formulating some perfumes). There are so many ways to express ourselves creatively if we are "allowed" or encouraged. My creative spirit literally leaped out of me when I began my long journey to recovery from an abusive, co-dependent relationship. And it has kept me alive and moving forward each day, as I've encountered the inevitable problems of life along the way.

First, I painted each room of my house in a bright, happy color: From reds, to blues, to greens, to yellows. Anything to distinguish the "beige" and oppression of my past life. Then, as emotions poured forth from my soul, poetry became my tool of recovery. Words jumped from my mind to paper, almost seamlessly, in a way that I had never experienced before. I wrote poetry like it was second nature. Anger, grief, loss – all expressed through these words that had been trapped inside of me.

Then I got into design work. I've always been a bit of an amateur photographer but learning how to express my work

(and that of others) through organizing a design of words and images on a page, gave me a sense of joy that I hadn't experienced before. It was like "birthing a child" to see my ideas come to life.

For some, music is the road to recovery. Or dance. The actual creative tool of recovery that you choose (or which often chooses you) is not relevant. The fact that you can express yourself creatively is the unsurpassed joy which is often suppressed in a dollar-orientated world. Creative thinkers often don't fit into our societal boxes: They question, are highly observant, are curious about life, daydream, imagine, and very often carve out their own path in life. Perhaps this spirit is so crushed in some that they turn to addiction to relieve their anxiety, their frustrations, their unhappiness with the culture expectations with which we live.

In a world where our emotional health very often takes a backseat to physical health, creativity gives us a healthy way to express these feelings and find a way back to recovery. To work through a problem. An experience. To *recover*.

So, have you met *your* inner artist yet? I promise you, it's there. Pick up a paintbrush, pen, music sheet, or perfume and see where it takes you! You'll be happy that you met it and won't want to let it go once you find it. You might not be the next Picasso, Bach, or Pavlova, but your life will be more joyful and happy for it.

From one artist to another,

Louise



## The Phoenix Spirit

RECOVERY • RENEWAL • GROWTH

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

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

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# Beautifully Broken

by *Crystal K.*

Perfectionist. Smart. Beautiful. These are a few of the many positive words that I was known by as a young teenager. On the outside, I was the girl who seemed like she had it all. The girl who had great friends, a boyfriend, was a cheerleader, and more. However, while the outward appearance and demeanor was one that many thought was happy and whole, secretly I had an internal struggle with myself. The things that others saw, I did not.

By the age of thirteen, negative thoughts filled my mind and I struggled to hear anything but my inner critic. I felt like I couldn't control these thoughts, so instead I tried to control other things. The first becoming my eating. This would start years of battling anorexia and bulimia. Somehow, controlling what I ate and when I ate helped me feel like I was controlling my thoughts and other things going on in my life.

When this wasn't enough, I began to cut. I didn't cut to harm myself. I cut to feel pain. I cut to feel something because I felt so numb all of the time. When my anxiety or depression would start to grow strong, it was a way to feel alive. For those who have never been through something of this nature, it makes no sense. Even today, it is still a struggle to feel relaxed and not anxious. I don't know if it ever goes away completely although I am aware that I do have good and not as good days.

Through all of these things going on, I promised everyone I was okay, and said I didn't need help. I wasn't going to cut again. I wasn't going to starve myself or force myself to throw up. I would say whatever anyone wanted me to say because I was too scared to ask for help. Asking for help would mean admitting to all those people who made comments about how perfect I was that I was lying. Eventually, the truth would emerge, and I would let them down, but at 18 years old, I couldn't stop the negative thoughts from consuming my mind and I felt helpless.

Two days before my senior year of high school, it all came tumbling down. I couldn't do it anymore. My family and friends would be better off without me and my issues, I thought. That is the day I disappeared to try and take my life for the first time. The world would be better off without me, right? No one would have to worry about me. Would anyone really even care if I was gone? These were some of many thoughts that I had that day. They were thoughts I'd had for a while.

Once I made a decision that the world didn't need me any longer, I felt relief. I felt happy almost, or so I thought. It was the mask of being in a depression for so long and finally "seeing the end." But angels show up in mysterious ways. As I prepared to leave this Earth, my phone began to ring. I didn't answer. It continued to ring...and ring...and ring. I finally answered and the voice on the other end was one of my best friends. She knew. I don't know how but she did, but she knew. All I remember is being asked "Where are you?" I simply replied, "The reservoir." And somehow, she knew where I was and arrived within minutes. She grabbed the empty bottles now lying in my car, picked me up, and the next thing I knew I was



being taken care of at the hospital.

Like so many times before, I told everyone I didn't need help. I was fine. I didn't know why I did what I did but there was no reason to get therapy or find out the root of my depression and anxiety. I still did not want to talk about the issues I was having, so I kept pretending. For another two years, I pretended to be happy because that was what I thought I was supposed to do. Deep down the inner struggles still existed though.

It would take a second suicidal attempt at 20 years old to finally make me realize I needed help and that I couldn't do this alone. This time was different. This time I was tired of struggling and pretending. I just wanted to be normal and feel normal.

*We cannot eradicate this global epidemic unless we all reach out and tell someone: "I care."*

My family was a huge support during this time. With their support, I began counseling as well as medicine to help with my anxiety and depression.

Through learning about my diagnoses, I realized that I didn't have to fight these feelings alone. I didn't have to pretend to be okay when I wasn't because I had family and friends that truly loved me for me. All the years of feeling like their love came from my outward successes turned into the realization that they truly loved me for who I was and not what I achieved. I also realized the pressure I had been feeling and the thoughts I had were not "crazy." They were effects of anxiety and depression. Just like someone who takes blood pressure medicine because they have high blood pressure, I needed something to help control my thoughts that felt like a constant whirlwind in my head. I also learned to talk about my feelings, my thoughts, myself really. I learned there were a lot of people walking around that needed to know they were not alone, too.

Fortunately for myself and my now husband and four boys, I survived to see the other side of things. God decided that He wasn't done with me, and that I had a purpose. Unfortunately, I have lost close family and friends to this battle throughout my life. One of the biggest losses was when my brother-in-law who served our country and came home with PTSD took his life in 2011. Not a day goes by that I don't miss him and wish he was here. The pain of losing him is something that will never go away. I would do anything

to keep another family from enduring the years of heartache that we have experienced and to think I was so close to causing this heartache to my family can be overwhelming at times.

This is the reason I am an advocate for Suicide Watch and Wellness Foundation. If we can save one life, save one family from enduring what my family does every day, it is worth the investment of time, money, energy – whatever it takes. When I met Misha and Ron, founders of Suicide Watch and Wellness Foundation, I knew instantly that we were going to grow close. We cannot prevent suicide unless we watch for the signs in others. We cannot eradicate this global epidemic unless we all reach out and tell someone: "I care."

We have to be aware by watching others – our friends, neighbors, family, co-workers. We have to create and support programs that advocate for mental wellness. Each of us has a responsibility to make the world better and give to others. If my story, if my involvement in talking about my struggles helps one person, that is one less person who ends their life before they learn to live. That is one less family that has to feel the emptiness of the seat that no longer is filled. That is one more person that knows someone cares because I care, and I hope you do as well.

Please send your First Person articles to [phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com](mailto:phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com).

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### Substance Use Disorders

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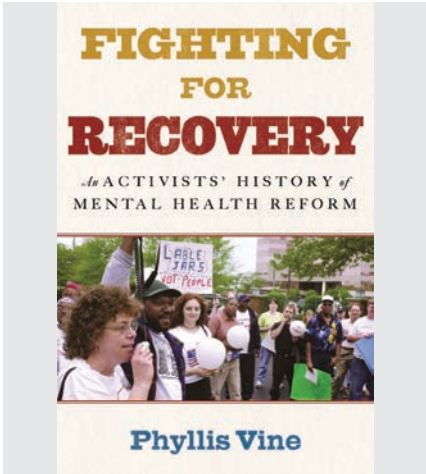
Burning out? Workaholics Anonymous provides steps and tools to break free from non-stop work and activity — or work avoidance. Meeting is currently online via Zoom. Call Pat for link to the meeting or questions: 763-560-5199. [www.workaholics-anonymous.org](http://www.workaholics-anonymous.org).

To place a Resource Directory listing call David at 612-298-5405 or email at [ads@thephoenixspirit.com](mailto:ads@thephoenixspirit.com)



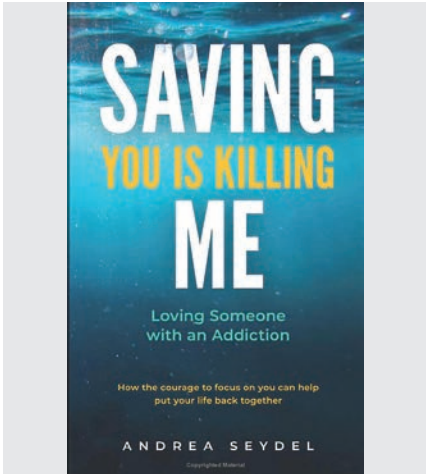


# Books



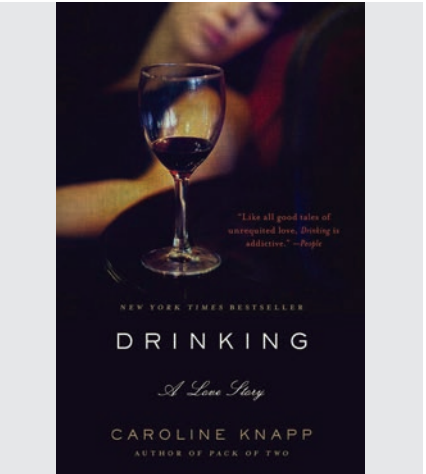
**Fighting for Recovery**  
An Activists' History of Mental Health Reform  
By Phyllis Vine  
BEACON PRESS

In *Fighting for Recovery*, professor and mental health advocate Phyllis Vine tells the history of the former psychiatric patients, families, and courageous activists who formed a patients' liberation movement that challenged medical authority and proved to the world that recovery from mental illness is possible. Mental health discussions have become more common in everyday life, but there are still enormous numbers of people with psychiatric illness in jails and prisons or who are experiencing homelessness – proving there is still progress to be made. This definitive people's history of the recovery movement spans the 1970s to the present day and proves to readers just how essential mental health activism is to every person in this country, whether you have a current psychiatric diagnosis or not.



**Saving You Is Killing Me**  
Loving Someone With an Addiction  
By Andrea D. Seydel  
LIVE LIFE HAPPY PUBLISHING

On the surface, *Saving You Is Killing Me: Loving Someone with an Addiction* is about navigating the path to freedom and a lifetime of healing, resilience, and happiness. But if you dig deeper, it is about creating a life you love, seeing your value, knowing your worth and being inspired to live a life that is better integrated with the person you are meant to be. As a leading voice advancing the science of applied Positive Psychology and the art of well-being, Andrea Seydel is devoted to sharing the science of resilience and ways to enhance your life even through struggle. Trauma and challenges are a fact of life; navigating the turmoil of loving someone with an addiction can be extremely damaging; Seydel teaches the reader how to struggle well and build resilience. *Saving You Is Killing Me: Loving Someone with an Addiction* offers new hope for reclaiming your life. Seydel provides insights and learning opportunities for self-healing, recovery, and resilience that foster empowerment.



**Drinking**  
A Love Story  
By Caroline Knapp  
DIAL PRESS TRADE PAPERBOOK

Fifteen million Americans a year are plagued with alcoholism. Five million of them are women. Many of them, like Caroline Knapp, started in their early teens and began to use alcohol as "liquid armor," a way to protect themselves against the difficult realities of life. In this extraordinarily candid and revealing memoir, Knapp offers important insights not only about alcoholism, but about life itself and how we learn to cope with it. It was love at first sight. The beads of moisture on a chilled bottle. The way the glasses clinked and the conversation flowed. Then it became obsession. The way she hid her bottles behind her lover's refrigerator. The way she slipped from the dinner table to the bathroom, from work to the bar. And then, like so many love stories, it fell apart. *Drinking* is Caroline Knapp's harrowing chronicle of her twenty-year love affair with alcohol. This startlingly honest memoir lays bare the secrecy, family myths, and destructive relationships that go hand in hand with drinking. And it is, above all, a love story for our times—full of passion and heartbreak, betrayal and desire—a triumph over the pain and deception that mark an alcoholic life.



**A Happier Hour**  
By Rebecca Weller  
MOD BY DOM

When Rebecca Weller's pounding, dehydrated head woke her at 3am, yet again, she stared at the ceiling, wondering why the hell she kept doing this to herself. At 39 years of age – and a Health Coach, no less – she knew better than to down several bottles of wine per week. Her increasingly dysfunctional relationship with alcohol had to stop, but after decades of social drinking, she was terrified of what that might mean. How could she live a joyful existence, without alcohol? How would she relax, socialize, or celebrate – without wine? In sheer frustration, on a morning filled with regret and tears, she embarks on a 3-month sobriety experiment that becomes a quest for self-discovery, and ultimately, transforms her entire world. *A Happier Hour* is a heartfelt, moving, and inspiring true story for anyone who has ever had to give up something they loved in order to get what they truly wanted.

Many of the book descriptions are taken from the publishers or promotional releases. 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](mailto:phoenix@thephoenixspirit.com) and we may include it in an upcoming issue.



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from page 1

Some patients may be from fine families, never giving their parents much concern until they get lured into drug use by friends and get hooked. Others may have been cycling through living on the street, in shelters, on a friend's couch, or in jail, or stuck in destructive and abusive home environments. For some of these teens, everyone in their lives has given up on them — or come darn close to it. They enter treatment with a host of emotional and behavioral problems intertwined with their addiction.

Herlofsky and her staff are undaunted.

"The thing about adolescents is they still think that they're going to change the world," she says, even when their living situation seems hopeless. "They have all of these dreams and all of these goals. And many of them are going to achieve those things."

To help them realize such a promising future takes massive amounts of patience, planning, and partnering. The first step is to get the young person physically stabilized. It may take days and the right mix of medication treatment to get the drugs flushed out of their system.

"I think one of the most concerning things that we're seeing, particularly in Minneapolis, Saint Paul and the immediate suburbs, is the explosion of fentanyl and opiates," says Herlofsky. "Kids have that brain development stage where they think that *nothing bad's gonna happen to me*, and they're using fentanyl and overdosing on fentanyl at alarming rates. So that's why the medication-assisted treatment piece becomes really important, because we have to figure out a way to keep these kids alive long enough that we can treat them and help them get better."

#### MEET CORE NEEDS FOR STABILITY

Once the teens enter treatment, full-time psychiatric staff see these patients throughout each week. Therapists and other staff also meet with them for extended periods every day. They pour on the love and acceptance these youth are desperate for, while helping them build skills for living a healthy life.

In the residential program supervised by Luke Bushman, the staff also partner with many local organizations and agencies to establish a stable and healthy environment for them when they leave treatment. A place to live. Food. Clothes. County support services.

"Sometimes," says Bushman, "it is the county taking custody, or it's a grandparent."



*Photos from top left to right / clockwise: Nicole Herlofsky of Fairview (Photos provided by Fairview); Photos from Lakeside Academy: Chapel, youth playing catch, working (Photos from Lakeside); Luke Bushman (Fairview) Opposite page: Youth from Lakeside Academy (Photo by Lakeside)*



"I think the most important work honestly that we do is within the family," says Herlofsky. "We're working on helping the parents with kind of basic parenting skills, about what is normal adolescent development and what behaviors do you need to address as a parent, helping them hold kids accountable. Reestablishing structure in the home that often by the time we see them has kind of gone out the window in terms of rules, expectations, appropriate consequences, those kinds of things. We work a ton on communication and how to have conflict safely and effectively at home."

Sometimes they work with divorced parents who, she says, "can't or won't co-parent together, and that poses significant challenges. So oftentimes we're starting



with two family sessions a week with each one of the parents, with the goal of trying to eventually merge that and get them to, at a very basic level, parent on the same page with some similar expectations."

#### STOP THE PAIN

Not every patient is in such dire straits. Ava, an A student and "over-achiever," according to her mother, chose to enter treatment after she got tired of lying to her parents. She was hiding her fentanyl use, which came about, she says, "from hanging out with the wrong group of friends." Her school performance got sloppy. All she could think about was getting her next fix, she says. She skipped going to work and got caught in lying about that. She also felt ill equipped to handle her emo-

**"They're painfully aware of the ways they've let everybody down. They've been using alcohol and drugs to get relief. They get stuck and get lost."**



tions. "I would cry, break down sobbing," she says, and fentanyl brought her relief.

In Fairview's treatment program, she learned how to notice her emotions building up and how to calm herself. "I don't cry that much now," she says. She's been sober for 10 months.

Ava's mother noticed a big change in her daughter.

"When she first came out, her confidence level — she was fearless," her mother recalls. "That's still there." And she believes that Ava is done with fentanyl. "One thing she has never wavered on is her commitment to sobriety. Those friendships have fizzled."

Ava and her parents sing the praises of the staff at Fairview. "Everyone was so nice," Ava says. "They saved my life."

# 2023 MARRCH ANNUAL CONFERENCE & EXPO

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from page 6

#### SURROUND THEM WITH A FAMILY SPIRIT

At a sprawling former Girl Scout camp among farmlands near Buffalo, Minnesota, you can almost smell the culture of kindness at the barbecue “Family Day” event at the lakeshore. The family in this case is the community of people who make up Lakeside Academy, which include 29 teenage boys and a passel of compassionate, fun-loving staff.

A biker pulls up, a woman once a troubled teen herself, now on staff. She gets a quick hug from a couple of the teenage boys as a group of them are drawn like flies to admire her set of wheels. Another boy is showing off a garter snake. Other boys shoot hoops nearby, and a few more are pulling out bows loaded with soft “arrows” to pelt at each other. They look nothing like a bunch of kids whose lives have been marked by a history of failure and rebellion that brought them to Lakeside.

This Christian-based school and treatment program draws students from around the country. They stay for 6-12 months.

Most of them come in “resistant,” says Lakeside’s director Jeff Jensen. Any adult who tries to talk to them is likely to be cussed out and hear, “This is stupid, I don’t have a problem,” according to Jensen.

It takes a while to make a dent in this hostility. The boys are generally not interested in talking to a counselor about their “feelings” from across a desk. At Lakeside, those conversations are more likely to happen while the student is on a walk with a counselor or tending to the horses and goats in the barn, making a birdhouse or restoring a canoe in the woodshop, or rebuilding an engine in the welding shop. Or out in the garden, on a boat, in the art room, or in the gym.

#### SHOW THEM RESPECT

What they find at Lakeside is people who quickly show they are genuinely interested in what the boys want. Jensen and his staff learn what that is from their collaborative, strengths-based approach to treatment.

Jensen’s eyes seem to mist over as he talks about how much these boys are hurting and how they are eager to be respected and understood. All the pressure they’ve been getting to shape up back home has alienated them, shut them down, he says.

“They want good relationships with their parents. They don’t want to do poorly in school,” say Jensen. “They’re painfully aware of the ways they’ve let everybody down. They’ve been using alcohol and drugs to get relief. They get stuck and get lost.”

Jensen’s staff work to create a safety net for these troubled teens. They ask the boys about their goals and then toss out questions like, *Is the way you’re behaving getting you that? How can we help you get what you want?* “We respond to defiance with love,” he explains.

Instead of responding to being cussed out by telling the boys to watch their language, Jensen says, they are more likely to respond with a warmhearted, “I’m sorry if what I said offended you. What can I do to make things better for you?” Boys used to being scolded are taken aback by this demonstration of care and respect. They soon learn the staff are indeed on their side.



#### BUILD EMOTIONAL SKILLS

“Most of them don’t have any capacity for emotional regulation,” Jensen says. “We give them those skills early on.” The boys learn how to notice the pressure building up in their bodies before it explodes. Self-soothing techniques become a new skillset for them. They learn to “step back,” take a walk, find another outlet for their feelings, throw cold water on their face, and other strategies to keep their brain’s amygdala from being hijacked by the intense emotions. They learn to notice how things turn out better for them when they do these things. They see themselves meeting their goals.

The boys attend an onsite school with transferable credits and special education teachers. The rest of their days are filled with group and individual meetings with members of their “care team,” and there is plenty of time for skateboarding, disc golf, time in the water, or other favorite activities.

#### FEED THEIR SPIRIT

“Spiritual care is part of their stay as well. They aren’t pressured to believe anything,” says Jensen. “That wouldn’t work,” he says. But, he adds, what most of the students do latch onto is finding some meaning and purpose in their lives. “They learn a message of love, of redemption,” he says. “They learn they don’t have to be defined by their past.”

*Pat Samples, is a Twin Cities freelance writer, writing coach, and somatic coach. Her website is patsamples.com.*

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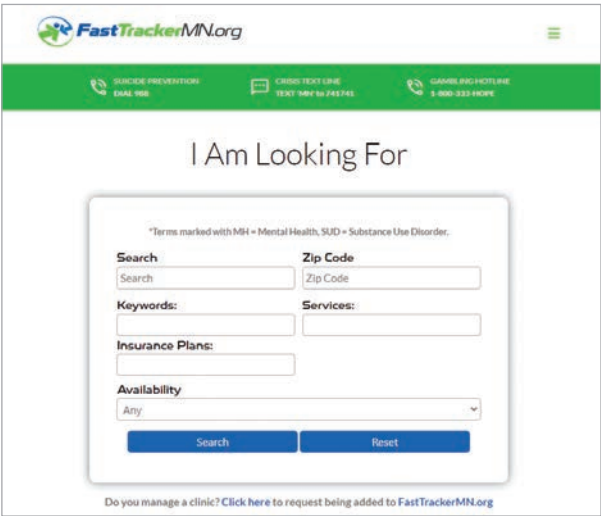


# Treatment Providers

The following directory consists of some of the substance use disorder programs/mental health providers in Minnesota that have listed their services on FastTracker (as of September 2023).

It's easy to find a list of those who offer these services by going to the SUD side search page at [sud.fasttrackermn.org](http://sud.fasttrackermn.org). Search using city, name, county, zip code, service or by keyword.

FastTracker is a virtual connection resource funded by the Minnesota Department of Human Services Behavioral Health Division and the State Opioid Response grant. FastTracker connects providers, care coordinators, and consumers with a real-time, searchable directory of mental and substance use disorder resources & their availability.



**A Better Connection**  
Park Rapids  
218-252-2785

**Abria Recovery**  
Burnsville  
952-406-8105

**Alliance Wellness Center**  
Bloomington  
952-562-3740

**Alluma**  
Crookston  
218-281-3940

**Amazing Grace Recovery Services**  
St. Francis  
763-753-6639

**Avivo Outpatient**  
Minneapolis  
612-752-8074

**Burkwood Treatment Center**  
Hudson (WI)  
877-373-0352

**Canvas Health**  
Multiple locations  
651-777-5222

**CenterLife Counseling**  
Multiple locations  
651-289-3111

**CentraCare**  
Saint Cloud  
320-229-3760

**Club Recovery**  
Edina  
952-926-2526

**Conceptual Counseling**  
St. Paul  
651-221-0334

**Cornerstone Therapy and Recovery Center**  
St. Paul  
651-645-0980

**CREATE, Inc.**  
Multiple locations  
612-874-9811

**Divine Hope Counseling**  
Willmar  
320-231-9763

**Effective Living**  
Saint Cloud  
320-259-5381

**Elite Recovery**  
St. Paul  
612-719-4137

**Ethos Recovery Clinic**  
Spring Lake Park  
763-298-9100

**Fairview**  
Multiple locations  
612-672-2736

**Freedom Center**  
Multiple locations  
763-308-0006

**Gateway Recovery Center**  
Inver Grove Heights  
833-DETOX-80

**Grace Counseling Services**  
East Bethel  
763-413-8838

**Haven Chemical Health**  
Multiple locations  
651-734-9633

**Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation**  
Multiple locations  
800-257-7800

**Hope House of Itasca County, Inc.**  
Multiple locations  
1-800-605-6047

**Inspire Services**  
Multiple locations  
507-364-5312

**Lake Country Associates**  
Multiple locations  
218-564-9229

**Lakeplace**  
Bovey  
218-245-1395

**Lakeside Academy**  
Buffalo  
844-768-8336 (TEEN)

**Lakeview Behavioral Health**  
Multiple locations  
1-866-327-LAKE

**Life Choices Chemical Health**  
Brooklyn Center  
763-762-6708

**Life Transformations**  
Breckenridge  
701-640-8915

**Living Free Recovery**  
Brooklyn Park  
763-315-7170

**Mental Health Resources**  
Fridley  
763-789-4895

**Meridian Behavioral Health**  
Multiple Locations  
877-367-1715

**Minnesota Adult & Teen Challenge**  
Multiple locations  
612-373-3366

**Minnesota Alcohol/Drug Assessments**  
Menahga  
218-640-6133

**Missions Inc. Programs**  
Plymouth  
763-559-1883

**Native American Community Clinic**  
Minneapolis  
612-872-8086

**New Beginnings**  
Multiple locations  
1-855-771-1659

**New Freedom Inc.**  
Princeton  
763-220-5483

**New Life Treatment**  
Worthington  
507-777-4321

**Newport Healthcare**  
Minneapolis  
844-603-0484

**North Homes Children and Family Services**  
Multiple locations  
218-751-0282

**Northern Pines Mental Health Center**  
Little Falls  
320-639-2025

**Northland Recovery**  
Multiple locations  
800-626-0377

**Northstar Behavioral Health**  
Multiple locations  
651-341-0929

**NorthStar Regional**  
Multiple locations  
1-833-677-4673

**NUWAY**  
Multiple locations  
651-404-2000

**Nystrom Treatment**  
Multiple locations  
612-778-4781

**Omada Behavioral Health Services**  
Northfield  
507-664-9407

**Park Avenue Center**  
Minneapolis  
612-871-7443

**Partners Behavioral Healthcare**  
Multiple locations  
888-648-7652

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Phone: 612-235-4677  
Email: 2118.admissions@nuway.org
  - 3Rs NUWAY Counseling Center (NE Mpls)**  
Phone: 612-789-8030  
Email: 3rs.admissions@nuway.org
  - NUWAY – University Counseling Center (St. Paul)**  
Phone: 651-404-2000  
Email: stpaul.admissions@nuway.org

**Outpatient program (virtual, in person options, adults of any gender)**

- St. Paul NUWAY Counseling Center**  
Phone: 612-235-4616  
Email: op.admissions@nuway.org

**For locations outside the Twin Cities, visit [nuway.org](http://nuway.org)**





## Rebecca Bjorklund BS, LADC

*A fearless advocate for behavioral healthcare and specifically substance use disorder and mental health, Rebecca “Becky” Bjorklund initially pursued a degree in Secondary Education at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls in 2009. It was her work at Meridian Behavioral Health’s Meadow Creek facility in early 2010, working as a Recovery Specialist and TMA, that grew her interest to pursue LADC licensure. Through her continued work and development at Meadow Creek as both an intake coordinator and program coordinator, Becky eventually went back to school and completed her LADC, and ultimately became Program Director at Meadow Creek in 2016. Never one to shy away from a challenge or opportunity, Becky spearheaded change and excellent patient-centered care at Meadow Creek and then Lake Shore for the next five years before taking another professional leap into the role of Director of Admissions and Utilization Review in 2021. She has been at the helm of running Meridian Behavioral Health’s entire front end for two years and has been the catalyst for process change and improvement, helping to streamline easier access to more patients across the Meridian system. Becky truly enjoys working with the population Meridian serves, and the unique circumstances and challenges many patients face. Her immediate goal is always to ensure fast and friendly access to care for both the referents and patients served.*

### THE PROCESS OF ENTERING TREATMENT

## Ask the Expert

**Q** Would you be able to provide some insights into your professional background, your present role, and the aspects of your daily work that you find particularly engaging?

My name is Becky Bjorklund, I am the Director of Admissions and Utilization Review (UR) at Meridian Behavioral Health. I have worked within our organization since 2010 in a variety of different roles from the sites to our main office. The thing I love most about what we do is seeing the positive change in our patients as well as the success stories.

**Q** For an individual considering substance use disorder treatment, what initial step is typically undertaken as part of the admissions process?

All it takes is a phone call and we will walk you through the admissions process, which typically requires a quick phone screen to help us understand our patient’s needs as well as to ensure we can meet those needs.

**Q** What is a comprehensive assessment?

Once onsite, our patients complete a comprehensive assessment. This assessment tool is used to gather information about our patients’ use history, medical history, mental health concerns, environmental concerns, as well as determine appropriate level of care.



**Q** In the event that an individual undergoes an assessment with one organization resulting in recommended treatment, are they permitted to pursue treatment services from an alternative company?

If you have already completed a comprehensive assessment, we use that prior to admission to ensure our programs are the right fit.

**Q** Can you please explain the different levels of care and how someone knows they’re going to enter the appropriate level of care?

There are a few different levels of care, which can be tricky sometimes for patients. The easiest thing is for them to call the admissions team and we can help them navigate this based on their individual needs. We utilize ASAM criteria to determine what level of care is most appropriate for the patient.

**Q** What usually happens right before someone enters treatment? What does it look like on the first day?

Once the individual is scheduled and arrives at our sites, we walk them through all necessary paperwork and have them meet with our nursing staff. We like to welcome our patients with a tour of the facility, introduce them to other staff and get them settled in.



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from page 10

Q Does the individual get to stay connected with their family and friends while in treatment? Would there be any challenges or complications that could arise from this?

Yes, support systems are a very important piece to recovery. We have family programming at all of our locations and encourage our patients to remain in contact with their support system throughout their treatment. We know that substance use all too often places a strain on our patient’s support system causing complications from time to time. We meet our patients where they are at and try to help them navigate through those challenges.

Q What kind of support is there for family members?

We have groups that are geared just towards the family and also offer family sessions for our patients and their families.

Q What are some of the barriers for people who are looking to get help for their substance use?

Some of the most common barriers we see include financial, patients being unsure of how to get the process started, transportation, and housing to name a few.

Q What are some general resources for people in Minnesota looking to access care?

County Health and Human Services, SAMHSA’s treatment locator, Fasttrack-ermn.org, hospital systems, or directly calling the treatment centers.

*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.*

**John H. Driggs**  
LICSW  
Psychotherapist

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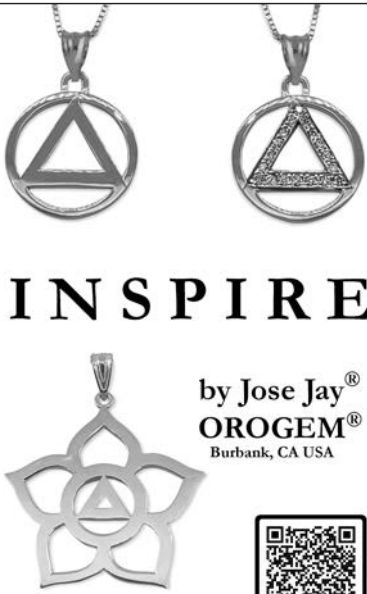
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Elk River, MN	19230 Evans St NW #203	612-454-2011
Litchfield, MN	114 North Holcombe	320-693-2461
Olivia, MN	104 So. 4 <sup>th</sup> Street	320-400-0001
St Peter, MN	320 Sunrise Drive #B	507-931-0918

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Driggs from page 1

as these behaviors hide the private world of deep insecurity in people with big egos. Looking strong is not the same as being strong.

The problem of identity loss is only getting worse. Young people are especially prone to identity loss. Research indicates that too many college students these days suffer from a “Peter Pan” syndrome. They may be technically smart but are overly compliant and conformist, avoid controversial stances, and overall defer to authority figures. Literally they don’t want to grow up into full adults as they’ve been trained all their lives to have their moms and dads solve their problems for them. Why would they suddenly opt now in college years to have their own identities when it’s just too comfortable for them not to grow up. So they become Peter Pans. Furthermore young people get ambushed by careerism. The overemphasis on career success to the detriment of learning for its own sake leaves many young people on a treadmill chasing the proverbial carrot on the stick instead of slowing down and getting to know themselves and deciding their own life course. Additionally, social factors—technology replacing human interactions, personal legal identities being bought and stolen, civic and community relationships diminishing, and parents being increasingly absent in the emotional lives of their families—all contribute to mass anomie. These days, being your own person are mere words. In fact, we are a long ways from becoming “An army of one” as our national military recruiters would like us to believe.

**WHAT’S THE HARM IN LACKING AN IDENTITY?**

There are evident problems with being invisible. You lose respect for yourself when you constantly have to dance to other people’s expectations. Even when you succeed you can’t be secure since tomorrow only brings another set of external expectations. You have to live with chronic anxiety of not fitting in unless you conform. The responsibilities for pleasing others becomes endless as what was asked of you today will not suffice for tomorrow. You are never truly accepted for who you are and have to live with chronic loneliness and unexpressed alienation even when things are good. More subtle difficulties arise as well. When you don’t know yourself, you struggle with even being a person. You may constantly waffle in making decisions and have problems with commitment and resist leadership in relationships and work. Consequently, in the absence of a core, you may be forced to resort to gamesmanship. The game of life may be like blindly playing darts. Sometimes you hit the mark; sometimes you don’t. Eventually others who can see—your spouse, children or boss—will run your life for you. You will feel you don’t have a life. When you lack an internal presence to reflect on yourself, you will be prone to depression, divorce, and emotional dysregulation. You will hate being alone with yourself. You will see little point to life. Is it any wonder you pretend?

**HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN YOU LACK AN IDENTITY?**

Having an identity means that you

*Having an identity means that you have an accurate and balanced view of yourself.*

have an accurate and balanced view of yourself including strengths and weaknesses that you can articulate and you have a respect for others who differ from you. You have an identity when you stand up for what you believe in despite losing perceived benefits. Finally you have an identity when you respect that right of others to have their identities and are concerned with what they think of you. Some signals of a lack of identity include:

- Continually trying to make people like you.
- Claiming to not care at all what others think of you.
- Persistent avoidance of disagreement or conflict with others.
- Lacking awareness of your own feelings, physical sensations, thoughts or expectations.
- Chronic spaciness and an altered sense of reality.
- Oblivion or indifference to the emotional needs of others.
- Inability to make decisions or state a personal preference.
- Chronic anxiety over being alone or left out.
- Continuing problems with envy, jealousy and holding grudges.

- Depression and addiction problems.
- Living through someone else’s life glories.
- Persistent caretaking and needing to be needed.

**WHY WE MAY PREFER TO BE IDENTITY LESS**

Despite its flagrant disadvantages, being a mere shadow of our potential self has its benefits. Some of us are living in truly threatening circumstances and doing a disappearing act is our way to cope. If we are in a physically abusive relationship, conformity may be our key to survival. Having a three car garage, several credit cards to pay off and three kids to put through college may prompt us to submit to a very undesirable but lucrative workplace setting until we can be in better circumstances down the road. Certainly when we lack emotional skills to know ourselves, much less express ourselves around critical others, due to our own childhood limitations some of us may decide to sit on the sidelines of life and watch life pass us by. No one deserves to be judged harshly for simply surviving and coping with the traumas and real threats in our life. We do the best we can.



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Lake Shore - Mahtomedi, MN  
Latitudes - St. Paul, MN  
Meadow Creek - Pine City, MN  
New Beginnings - Waverly, MN  
New Beginnings IOP - 8 Locations  
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Tapestry - St. Paul, MN  
Twin Town - St. Paul, MN



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However, some of us may choose to remain identity less due to perceived but not real threats to our lives. In reality the threats are internal, not external. We do a disappearing act in life and only pretend to be present when we fear some gravely unacceptable aspect of ourselves may be revealed to others. We become stoic and can't allow others to see the most feared aspects of ourselves. We deceive ourselves into believing that if we can spare others from knowing our big, bad secrets then we ourselves will be safe from them.

Some of us disappear—by having inflated or deflated false public selves—simply because we are not ready to accept our deep dark secrets. Usually our secrets are nothing so great once they are exposed but keeping them hidden imprisons us in permanent shame and selflessness. Some of us become so good at hiding that we get others, like a spouse, to fill in our missing pieces for us. The perceived benefits of being a “kept man” or “trophy wife” may be too hard to resist. We may even forget that we are only pretending.

#### GETTING A SELF

Getting a self is a lifelong retraining process, not a dramatic one-time act in itself. Although there are things we can do alone to foster a personal identity—such as keeping a feelings journal, reading a book on self-assertion and selfhood (Who Am I? Really by Sheldon Kopp), or developing a beloved but long-lost art or hobby, we really can't do it all on our own. We all need other trustworthy people to have a self. Having a self always occurs through caring relationships that accept us for who we already are.

Some of us have one trusted friend we can be more open to than we have been. Some of us may need a professional guide to help us open up and even recognize who we really are. Some of us may have no idea who we really are because we have never allowed somebody to know us or else we have distracted ourselves by over involvement with another person's problems. Attending a regular Al-anon group may very much help us with a sense of self. The show-and-tell of having encouraging, and honest feedback from another human is how we develop a self. Our brains turn on and we learn who we are when get up close and personal.

It may seem odd and paradoxical that we need other people to be fully independent. Too many of us feel to be our own person we shouldn't need others. Just the opposite is true. We become independent when we emotionally take in and incorporate the loving support of others. Love gives us life. Recall the wise words in the marvelous story, The Velveteen Rabbit by Margery Williams: “Real isn't how you are made,” said the Skin Horse. “It's a thing that happens to you. When a child love you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but really loves you, then you become real.”

*John H. Driggs, LICSW, is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in private practice in St. Paul and co-author of Intimacy Between Men. This article was first published in the September 2008 issue of The Phoenix Spirit. John is taking a break from writing and will return with a new article in November.*

FROM THE STATE OF MINNESOTA

## Interview With Addiction and Recovery Director Jeremy Drucker

Addiction and Recovery Director Jeremy Drucker begins his tenure under the office of the governor. His goal is to make an impact on the state's efforts to stem the rising cases of overdoses and offer resources throughout Minnesota to help those in recovery. We wanted to know a little more about Drucker and what he hopes to achieve in his new role.

#### COULD YOU BRIEFLY INTRODUCE YOURSELF, INCLUDING HOW YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY MIGHT DEPICT YOU, AND WHAT PROPELS AND MOTIVATES YOU?

My name is Jeremy Drucker, I am a person in recovery. I have worked in public affairs, both inside and outside of government for over 15 years. Previously I was training to be an English Literature professor at the City University of New York and worked in restaurants for a dozen years.

I think my friends and family would say that I treat people respectfully, that I am easy to get along with and reliable and have a bit of an irreverent sense of humor. I am motivated by a strong commitment to seeing that I leave everything I get involved with in a better place than it was before.

#### WHAT WERE YOUR INITIAL THOUGHTS UPON BEING OFFERED THE DIRECTOR POSITION AT THE OFFICE OF ADDICTION/RECOVERY? WHAT INFLUENCED YOUR DECISION TO TAKE ON THIS ROLE?

This was probably the only job that would have drawn me back into state government. The opportunity to work on something I care so deeply about from a position like this doesn't come along very often, if ever, and I really felt like I couldn't pass it up.

#### GIVEN YOUR PUBLIC OPENNESS ABOUT YOUR LONG-TERM RECOVERY, HOW DO YOU ANTICIPATE THIS WILL SHAPE YOUR APPROACH TO YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES?

I think my recovery brings to this position a very clear sense that people can and do recover, especially when they have access to the resources to do so. My approach is really focused on how we increase recovery for more people and in more places. There are more than twenty million people in recovery across the country, and while we oftentimes focus on the people with substance use disorder who are not in recovery, it's important to remember all the people that are. Looking at what works is just as important as looking at what doesn't, so focusing on how we can help people achieve and maintain momentum in their recovery is something I try to do.

#### GIVEN YOUR RECENT START IN YOUR CURRENT ROLE, HOW DO YOU ENVISION YOUR OFFICE MAKING AN IMPACT ON THE STATE'S ADDICTION AND RECOVERY LANDSCAPE?

This office can play a really important role in helping to coordinate and align the different agencies in state government that deal with substance use. In the recovery community there is a saying that “connection is the opposite of addiction,” and that is the approach I bring to



Jeremy Drucker / Photo provided by Drucker and Alexander Hall (MN DHS)

this work. Building connections between people, communities, disciplines, state agencies, governments. That is really important. Because when people and organizations are connected, they start to work better together, and I believe that is a big part in how we help close the gaps in what is oftentimes a very fragmented substance use and recovery system.

#### WHAT'S YOUR RESPONSE TO THOSE WHO ARGUE THAT YOUR OFFICE ADDS UNNECESSARY GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE?

The social, familial, and economic cost of substance use is massive. By working better together, reducing deaths, and increasing recovery, we will save not only lives and emotional devastation, but also a significant amount of dollars as well.

#### WHAT ARE YOUR PRIMARY ASPIRATIONS AND OBJECTIVES DURING YOUR TENURE AS DIRECTOR?

We want to create a recovery-oriented system of care for all Minnesotans that provides accessible, quality, and culturally responsive services across the substance use continuum.

Last legislative session we made a lot of strides towards that by investing

over \$200 million in new dollars in substance use disorder, one of the biggest investments in the state's history. Those investments crossed the entire continuum of care from prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery. Making sure we are implementing those dollars in a way that maximizes their effectiveness is a top priority in addition to building the infrastructure of the office.

#### HOW CAN READERS AND FELLOW MINNESOTANS SUPPORT INDIVIDUALS IN RECOVERY OR THOSE SEEKING RECOVERY?

One of the big things we can all do is reduce stigma. The stigma around substance use disorder is still so huge. We've made progress over the last several years but too many people still treat substance use as a moral failing and not the disease that it is. Even those of us in recovery often still stigmatize ourselves.

That stigma permeates our entire system and prevents people from getting the help they need or treated in the way you would be treated if you had a different illness. It took until 2008 just for mental health and substance use to be given legal parity with physical health, and we still have a really long way to go.

#### IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE OR ANY RESOURCES YOU RECOMMEND TO OUR READERS?

Just to reiterate that people can and do recover. There are many pathways to recovery, and there are resources available no matter who you are or where you are at in your recovery journey. If you or someone you know is struggling, reach out. No one should suffer in silence. Getting the help we need, when we need it isn't weakness, but a sign of strength. Some good resources are:

- **Minnesota Recovery Connection:** [https://minnesotarecovery.org/resources\\_search](https://minnesotarecovery.org/resources_search)
- **Steve Rummeler Hope Network:** <https://steverummelerhopenetwork.org/recovery/treatment-resources>
- **Minnesota Department of Health Recovery Resources:** <https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/children-youth/schoolhealth/toolkitrecov.html>

*We want to thank Jeremy Drucker for his time in responding to our questions and wish him all the best in his new role with the State of Minnesota.*

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## RECOVERY SPOTLIGHT

# How Scent Can Aid in Recovery

by Sharon Falsetto Chapman



Scent is the strongest of our human senses. That makes it both a gift and a curse. If you want to inhale the beautiful, soft scent of the newest rose in your garden, it's a gift; but if you're passing the sewage treatment center, well, think again!

In the book, *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer*, Patrick Süskind writes:

"Odors have a power of persuasion stronger than that of words, appearances, emotions, or wills. The persuasive power of an odor cannot be fended off, it enters into us like breath in our lungs, it fills us up, imbues us totally. There is no remedy for it."

This powerful piece of writing could summarize the struggles that an addict battles with – and the key to their healing. Scent has the power to heal – but it also has the power to take us back to a place that we don't want to go.

## HOW SCENT IMPRINTS ITSELF ON OUR MEMORIES

There is a scientific explanation for how scent gets up our noses – literally – and stimulates the part of the brain where our memories are stored. But in this article, I want you to think about your own memories associated with scent. I have heard stories from clients that they cannot use anything associated with roses, for example, as the scent reminds them of a grandmother who treated them unfairly as a child. Even though rose is an excellent aroma to help in healing, if "bad memories" are associated with it, it most likely will have negative connotations on any attempts in using it as part of the healing process.

I, too, have dissociative memories when it comes to the smell of beer. I grew up in the north of England where pubs (public houses) were community meeting places, and nothing was thought of from "having a pint or two" with a friend down at the "local." Back then, the aroma of beer was comforting to me, and reminded me of misspent times with college friends. However, fast forward twenty years to my former relationship with an abusive spouse, who started popping beer cans at 6.30 in the morning, and both the sound of that ring pull, and the aroma of the beer, washed anxiety, and nausea, over me in

waves. It has taken me literally years to lay that ghost to rest.

Yet, in my work as an aromatherapist and a botanical perfumer, I surround myself daily in scents and know that scent *can* be healing – if you know how to utilize it, and know the history of your client, to avoid any backward steps. In this article, we are specifically focusing on how scent can help addicts in recovery.

## POSITIVE ODOR STIMULI FOR RECOVERY

So, as discussed above, aromas sometimes have negative associations. This means that the successful outcome to an addict's recovery using scent is to provoke a *positive* memory, and not over-expose them to a scent that may provoke a negative response. This is summarized by this quote from one particular study which looked at *The Role of Odor-evoked Memory in Psychological and Physiological Health*:

"Any odor that for a given individual evokes a happy autobiographical memory has the potential to increase positive emotions, decrease negative moods, disrupt cravings, lower stress and decrease inflammatory immune responses, and thereby have a generally beneficial effect on psychological and physiological well-being. Odor-evoked memories may also be able to stimulate specific emotions, such as self-confidence, motivation and vigor, and thus energize behavior as a function of the specific emotions that a given odor-evoked memory evokes."<sup>1</sup>

However, the secret is not only in using the "right" scent, but also at the "right" amount for that person. For example, lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) is perceived as a "calming" aroma and is often used to help insomnia issues for this reason. But if you use too much lavender, you will find that it suddenly becomes a stimulating aroma and has you wide awake through the small hours of the morning, desperately searching for that elusive sleep. Provoking positive memories with odors can be a tricky business if you don't know how to use them!

## ADDRESSING THE SYMPTOMS OF ADDICTION WITH SCENT

Regardless of the type of addiction, most addictions trigger similar problems

in the long run if left untreated. These include issues such as depression, anxiety, insomnia, panic attacks, stress, feeling of hopelessness, restlessness, and digestive issues. An example of aromas which may help with some of these problems include:

- Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*): Nausea and digestive issues.
- Grapefruit (*Citrus × paradisi*) and black pepper (*Piper nigrum*): Reduce cravings.
- Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*): Insomnia and stress.
- Peppermint (*Mentha × piperita*): Improves concentration and focus.
- Clary sage (*Salvia sclarea*): Helps to manage panic attacks.

## INHALING AROMAS FOR SCENT RECOVERY

For people who don't like to be touched by anyone, or apply anything to their skin, inhalation of scents is probably the best place to get started in aiding addict recovery. Scent diffusers are commonplace and often used to pump out a "pleasant" aroma in doctors' waiting areas and perhaps therapists' offices. However, there are a few problems with this method.

There is no "one size fits all" when it comes to aroma-therapy. As discussed, some scents can trigger negative responses based on people's memories or associations with it; too much of a particular aroma can end up having the opposite of the intended effect. And some aromas should not be diffused around vulnerable groups such as pregnant women, seniors, babies and children, and those suffering with particular diseases. So, putting a scent in a diffuser and putting it out there for ev-

eryone is not the best way to go.

If you are at home, and have a well-ventilated space, using a diffuser might be an option, if you know which scent to use and how to use it. Otherwise, a personal inhaler (a bit like the old *Vicks* inhalers) is probably the most discreet and more successful tool to use in recovery.

## TOUCH THERAPY IN SCENT RECOVERY

Some people find comfort in being touched, and if this is you, you might benefit from a combined massage and aromatherapy treatment. Not only do you get to inhale the scent, but it also absorbs through your skin (through the application of a massage oil) and through the touch of a qualified therapist. Studies have shown that the use of massage therapy in the alcoholic's recovery journey can help with the detoxification process.<sup>2</sup>

## DOES SCENT THERAPY AID IN RECOVERY?

There are several things to consider when thinking about the use of scents in an addict's recovery program. To summarize, you need to think about:

- Does the scent trigger any negative memories or emotions?
- Does the scent promote a positive mood?
- How much of the scent should you use?
- Which method should you utilize to take advantage of scent therapy?

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from page 14

Scent has the power to heal – but it also has the power to take us back to a place that we don’t want to go.

- Will the scent be appropriate to manage the symptoms that you intend to address?

If you are thinking about using scent as part of your own recovery program, or in helping a patient or addict overcome their addiction, it’s important that you work with a qualified aromatherapist or scent therapist, who is working as part of a team of professionals in managing the addict’s overall recovery plan. This might include medical supervision, emotional support, and therapist intervention. Consider the individual’s needs, history, and preferences first and foremost.

Used correctly, scent can be an important tool in helping recovery. You just have to know how, and when, to use it.

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ESSAY ON RECOVERY

# The Promise of the Promises: Our Rewards for a Sober Life

by Angelo Gentile

*The reward for living a good, clean, and sober life is... a good, clean, and sober life.*

I read that in a recent article in the *Grapevine*, AA’s monthly magazine, and it really resonated with me. Simple yet wise. I don’t give myself enough credit—and I suspect many of my fellow recovering albies and addicts don’t either—for choosing each day to make healthy choices as we walk the path toward a better life.

What fuels me in walking that path are The Promises. Those Promises, as AA’s Resource Center states, are “lights at the end of the tunnel, giving you things to look forward to.”

Even my mother, many years ago, when talking about life in general, would often advise me of that wisdom: “Have something to look forward to.” I keep that in mind whether I’m making grand plans—gotta chart my next winter road trip south—or smaller ones, like my occasional *Dunkin’ Donuts* coffee runs with my good friend Larry. Have something to look forward to.

You’ll find The Promises in chapter six, “Into Action,” on pages 83-84 of the Big Book: “We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.”

Like many of us, I was pretty far down that scale. I lived those dark days

of despair, not knowing anything close to peace or serenity, fearing people, lying to them and then struggling to keep my stories straight, carrying around the shaming burden of money troubles, especially during those dreadful times when I would sit down to try to pay bills that just seemed to multiply. And yet by some miracle and the grace of my Higher Power, I found AA, the 12 steps, a solid sponsor, and the support and friendship of fellow albies and addicts. The struggles and struggling eventually stopped. I am grateful today that I now have 35 years of sobriety and these promises are being fulfilled daily—the rewards for living a sober life.

Is everything perfect? Ha! Of course not. But things are way better than before. And I also take solace in these words from *How it Works* (Big Book, chapter five), “We claim spiritual progress, not spiritual perfection.” I have to remind myself of this from time to time: It’s progress not perfection. *How it Works* also says we are not saints. Amen to that.

And, speaking of things divine, that last promise also strikes a chord for me, realizing that “God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.” No matter how one perceives God or a Higher Power—it is a power or force greater than ourselves, a grace that helps us.

In other words, as the author Annie Lamott wrote in an essay on the miracles of recovery—and given that it’s baseball season—“Grace bats last.”

Angelo Gentile is a Minneapolis freelance journalist.



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# The Cost of Loneliness

by *Mary Lou Logsdon*



I suppose it was inevitable. I thought I was past the possibility. We were done with Covid—a story to tell our grandchildren when we're very old. And it's summer when we are outside, breezes blowing viruses away. But no. The dreaded virus was not yet done with us. We gathered together as family in two condos for summer play and reuniting—22 of us. Although everyone was vaccinated and boosted, one by one we were struck. Texts were traded. *Tested Positive. Yup, positive. Still negative. Now it's my turn. OMG.* Among us we had all the symptoms—but like family resemblances, it took a different turn for different people. The days of glad gathering led us to days of isolation.

I was thrust back into the sense of dread, remembering those early weeks of the pandemic shut down. Alone. Aware of the danger of contact. Contaminated—like wearing a Scarlet “C.” I canceled ten days of activities and withdrew from the public commons.

On top of that, I was sick. I felt lousy. Fatigue slowed my days. Coughing invaded my sleep. Kindness gave way to crankiness. Nothing was appealing.

Well, I thought, this is like a retreat, time to withdraw and reflect. One of my friends had a better word—*house arrest*. Isolation.

While five-ten days of isolation was an annoyance for me, it was important for the good of those to whom I might have spread it.

As I came to terms with this disruption, I had to share time with a number of nagging emotions. There was Connie the Critic who demanded to know what I had done to make this happen. Then there was Barry the Blamer looking for a scapegoat on whom I could load all my anger and resentment. Gretta the Grumbler is my perpetual victim. She felt very sorry for herself. Why do bad things **always** happen to me? Let's look for someone to save me. Eventually Jenny the Judge stopped by to assess how others were treating me. Was I getting enough attention? Was I missed? Did they understand how wretched this was?

I find my emotional companions all have something important to tell me—and while I give them their moment, I cannot let them dominate my thinking.

Once I quieted my fleet of feelings, I settled into isolation. It brought back memories of early Covid time—the haunted empty streets, the silent neighborhoods, the masked smiles. I recalled how I missed the simple exchanges at the grocery store, in-person conversations, the chatter of children.

Isolation and loneliness continue to be problems for many of us, and are, in fact, a serious health threat. Our Surgeon General, Vivek H. Murthy, describes an epidemic of loneliness. It isn't just Covid. We were getting lonelier before the pandemic as well. The ramifications are serious. In an April *New York Times* opinion piece, Murthy says, “When people are socially disconnected, their risk of anxiety and depression increases. So does their risk of heart disease (29 percent), dementia (50 percent), and stroke (32 percent).” Many of us are aware of the rapid increase in deaths from despair. Our social networks are fraying.

Murthy names three areas that need to be addressed. “First, we must strengthen social infrastructure—the programs, policies, and structures that aid the develop-

ment of healthy relationships. That means supporting school-based programs that teach children about building healthy relationships, workplace design that fosters social connection, and community programs that bring people together.

“Second, we have to renegotiate our relationship with technology, creating space in our lives without our devices so we can be more present with one another. That also means choosing not to take part in on-line dialogues that amplify judgment and hate instead of understanding.

“Finally, we have to take steps in our personal lives to rebuild our connection to one another.”

The second and third suggestions are things we can address in our everyday lives. We can take an honest look at how we use and misuse technology. I find that at the least temptation of boredom I pull out my phone. It is easier to check the news than it is to think about my own challenges. We sit by the people with whom we live as we scan the electronic landscape. We expect instantaneous news, immediate updates, the latest happenings. Meanwhile we lose the slow delights of enjoying each other's company.

I listened to an interview with Sheila Liming who was discussing her new book, *Hanging Out: The Radical Power of Killing Time*. She builds a convincing case for simply spending time together, not to accomplish something, simply to get to know someone, listen to their stories, share your own. We used to do that, stop over at another's house without an appointment just to shoot the breeze. Children do it—make new friends at the playground, collect neighbors for an impromptu game, form ever changing alliances. As I listened to her, I longed for that easy flow of time without an agenda, unproductive and unstructured time.

My weekly walking friend and I used to simply meet between our two houses. I have moved and now one of us drives to meet the other. We have extended our allotted time to allow us to sit with a glass of water afterward, to “hang out” rather than rush to the next thing.

The Surgeon General's urgency isn't just about the health of individuals. Our increasing isolation is not good for our democracy either. “When we are less invested in one another, we are more susceptible to polarization and less able to pull together to face the challenges that we cannot solve alone—from climate change and gun violence to economic inequality and future pandemics. As it has built for decades, the epidemic of loneliness and isolation has fueled other problems that are killing us and threaten to rip our country apart.”

I know that I cannot solve all of this, but I can do something. I can support programs that build and sustain community. I can discipline my usage of electronics. I can forge and maintain connections with people, both those dear to me and those I encounter in the comings and goings of my day.

We are social animals. We are not meant to be alone. Let's be a community together.

*Mary Lou Logsdon is a Spiritual Director in the Twin Cities. You can reach her at [logsdon.marylou@gmail.com](mailto:logsdon.marylou@gmail.com).*